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REGINALD DALTON.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
VALERIUS, AND ADAM BLAIR.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH;
AND T. CADELL, LONDON.

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English

REGINALD DALTON.

BOOK III. CHAP. I.

THERE is perhaps no town in the world where the truth of the Wise Man's saying, "the thing that hath been is that also which shall be," is more regularly and continually receiving exemplification than in old Oxford. Dinner follows dinner in the same solemnity of observance ; and for the most part, the evening is spent among the young men precisely in the same style with which Mr Stukeley's party has made us acquainted.

Reginald Dalton commenced his career, as we have seen, with high purposes and resolutions of studious labour ; and Mr Barton had for several weeks the utmost reason to be satisfied with the

progress he made, both in his classical and in his mathematical pursuits. Often, after leaving his tutor's apartment, did the young man repair to his own, with fresh determination to make his duty his pleasure, and resist the temptations which were continually thrown in his way, to end a well-spent day in idleness and dissipation. But seldom, very seldom, we must admit, did the hour, when the trial came, find him prepared for the struggle. To say truth, the natural quickness of his parts enabled Reginald, by a very little time spent over his books, to prepare himself abundantly for what his tutor expected from him next day. Barton, a great scholar, but by no means a quick man originally, judged only from what came under his notice at the hour of lecture, and comparing what Reginald had done with what he himself could have done at the same period of life, gave the youth easy credit for having passed in solitary labour the hours that had for the most part been devoted to the tennis-court, the rowing-match—above and after all, to those light-hearted circles, where the bottle and the flagon never ceased to hold their jovial rounds.

There can be no doubt, that, in many more ways than this, the peculiar habits and temper of Reginald's tutor were a great misfortune to our youth. That he was the most deeply-read man in all the College, was comparatively a small advantage, when those great acquirements were coupled with personal habits which prevented their possessor from knowing almost any thing from other people about the way in which his pupil lived ; and, what was still worse, with a shyness and reserve, the natural consequences of total seclusion, such as rendered it almost impossible that even the frankness of one originally disposed to make no secrets, should not have gradually become chilled and repressed under the influence of his presence. By degrees Reginald came to partake in those feelings of restraint, without which no one, for a long period of time, had ever been accustomed to approach this melancholy recluse ; for once, a virtuous act, (for such certainly was his original choice of Barton's tutorship,) led directly and immediately to evil results ; and he who, under the guidance of a less learned, but more accessible man, might have done very great

things, did, in effect, but little ; and, which was still more dangerous, was able to satisfy all but his own conscience in doing so. That indeed was a monitor which it was by no means so easy to lull ; yet, alas ! in evil as in good, power is progressive ; and where is the conscience whose stings, even in their infinite variety, custom cannot stale ?

The first time Reginald had a party at his own rooms, as is usual upon such occasions, a scene of much more than every-day excess took place. Mr Chisney, and several other *out-College men*, were present, and when that is the case, a species of rivalry is always sure to aggravate an Oxonian debauch. Among other things, there was a great deal of talk about fox-hunting, and Reginald found himself exposed, not only to surprise, but to something like derision, when he confessed that he had never been witness to that noblest of British sports. Two or three of the young men present were to ride to the cover at Newnham Harcourt early next morning, and meet Mr Hooker's hounds ; and upon Chisney's suggestion, Reginald was warmly pressed to join the party. He yielded after a little time the more readily, because Mr Stukely insist-

ed on mounting him. Chisney, who had agreed to go also, dispatched forthwith a message to secure his favourite hack, and the matter being thus arranged, conversation soon took another turn.

Unfortunately there occurred, towards the close of the evening, what is, to their honour be it spoken, a very rare thing indeed among these academical *roués*—a quarrel. Some hasty word led to a hot reply, and that to a fiery rejoinder; and the end was, that a glass of wine being thrown in one young man's face, he returned the compliment with a decanter. The madness of youth and wine then soared high above every restraint; and in spite of all that our hero could do to allay the ensuing tumult, it concluded only when twelve o'clock expelled the strangers. In the course of this violent scene, Frederick Chisney had been so extravagantly outrageous, that Reginald himself had been obliged to knock him down, to use Homer's illustration, "like an ox in the stall;" for one of the Fellows of * * * having come to the door, alarmed by the tempest of voices within, Mr Frederick had not only received the reverend intruder with epithets of the most savage abuse, but

had even exhibited such symptoms of more desperate rudeness, as had certainly most abundantly justified his youthful and comparatively sober host in taking what appeared to be the only effectual step for securing the safe exit of the Senior.

Although, however, Reginald was at the moment sober in comparison with Chisney, he had, in reality, drunk quite sufficiently to render his recollection of what had passed very confused the next morning. When he awoke, a hot and feverish thirst parched his lips, and when he essayed to rise, his brain reeled, and his eye swam in dizziness. By a sickly effort of strength he got up, and plunging his whole head into a basin of cold water, kept it there until every limb shook beneath the strong stimulus ; and his faculties were in a great measure cleared, and his thoughts composed, by the time he had dried his hair. He drank long and largely, and feeling himself comparatively at ease, he opened his bed-room door, intending to seek for his watch, which he had not discovered in its usual situation. He opened the door—but with what horror did he shrink from the scene which met his view !—Tables overturned, chairs broken,

gowns torn, and caps shattered—candlesticks planted prostrate in their own grease—bottles and glasses shattered to atoms—floods of wine soaking on the filthy floor—horrid heavy fumes polluting the atmosphere—utter confusion everywhere—and a couple of dirty drowsy scouts labouring among all the loathsome ruin of a yesterday's debauch.

Reginald turned in sickness from the abomination, and clapping the door behind him, flung himself upon his bed in an agony of shame and remorse. The image of his father rose before him—his father, far away in that virtuous solitude, robbing himself of what he could ill spare, that his son might not want the means of improvement, and cheering and sustaining his lonely hours with the hopes of meeting that only favourite, improved in intellect, and uncorrupted in manners. The calm beautiful valley, the dear sequestered home, the quiet days, the cheerful nights, the happy mornings—all the simple images of the peaceful past came crowding over his fancy in the sad clearness of regret. Even now, he said to himself, even now, he of whom I shall never be worthy, his thoughts are upon me ! Alas ! how differently

will his fond imagination picture the scene with which his son is surrounded ! How little will he dream of frantic riot, mad debauchery, this idleness, this drunkenness, this degradation ! His solitary pillow is visited with other dreams—dreams !—dreams indeed ! O why came I hither ?—why was I flung thus upon myself, ere I had strength enough to know myself—to know if it were but my weakness ? Alas ! my too kind, my too partial parent, how cruelly will he be undeceived ! For him, too, I am preparing pain—pain and shame—and for what ?—for fever, for phrenzy, for madness, for the laughter of fools, the merriment of idiots, the brawls, the squabbles of drunken boys—this hot and burning brain, these odious shivering qualms, this brutal giddiness, and all yon heart-oppressing pollution !

The first violences of self-reproach had scarcely had time to soften amidst new and equally violent resolutions of amendment, sobriety, and diligence, when his bed-room door was opened, and Frederick Chisney, and Dick Stukeley, both ready booted for the chace, burst in cracking their whips, and abusing him for his laziness. In vain did Reginald plead that he was ill, that he was

sick, that he could not, should not, would not go. Neither would understand anything except that he had an aching head, and a disordered stomach, for both of which, they said, one good gallop was a better cure than all Dr Ireland's gallipots. They opened Reginald's wardrobe, and tumbling every thing over, found an old green frock, which it was agreed would look tolerably knowing on a young rider, and a pair of white corduroys, against which, as they had come from Teddy Theed's hands but the day before, nobody could have said anything. In short, they *made* poor Reginald rise, and stood over him till the reluctant youth, vainly reproaching himself, and as vainly beseeching his companions, was equipped the best way his wardrobe permitted. Stukely then dragged him to his own apartments, where he provided him with spurs and a whip, gave him a ribbon to tie his hat to his button-hole withal, and set him down to a smoking beef-steak with plenty of black pepper and mustard—which last application, it must be owned, did more for the stomach and the spirits of the patient, than anything the wisdom of the Faculty could have administered under such circumstances.

Stukeley had sent forward his horses some hours earlier, and provided a gig, in which he gave Reginald a seat to Newnham. The gig became a tandem the moment it was beyond the Proctor's jurisdiction, and gaily they bowled along, Chisney sometimes trotting his hack by their side, and sometimes lost to their view among the many groupes of juvenile sportsmen with which the road was garnished.

There is nothing in which the young sinners of a debauch have so decidedly the better of the old ones, as in the facility with which their unshattered constitutions enable them to shake off the painful part of its immediate consequences. I say the PAINFUL part—because really, when the sickness and the headache are gone, the feverish fervour which remains about the brain, is with them neither a pain nor a punishment. A sort of giddy reckless delirium lies there, ready to be revived and rekindled by the mere winds of heaven ; and, in fact, when such excitements as air and exercise are abundantly applied, a sort of legacy of luxury is bequeathed to them, even by their departed carousal ; and it is in this point of view only, I apprehend, that any charitable person will

ever interpret old Tom Brown's glorious chaunt of

“ Wine, wine in the morning
Makes us frolic and gay,
That like eagles we soar
In the pride of the day.”

Alas ! such things are very agreeable while they last ; but repetition is annihilative of that perilous joy, and ere long the young debauchee suffers the same penalty as those who have gone before him. In the meantime, however, this precious inheritance was enjoyed by our youths—ay, even by Reginald Dalton himself, in spite of all the doleful meditations that had attended his waking—as they proceeded through that beautiful country—for even in December it was beautiful—a fine healthful breeze fanning their cheeks—the sky clear azure, with here and there light drifting grey clouds overhead—prancing horses and gay horsemen before and behind—red jackets glancing and gleaming every where—neigh echoing neigh—and whistle responding to whistle, from

“ Buggy, gig, and dog-cart,
Curricie and tandem.”

The common where the hounds were to cast off, presented a scene, if possible, still more varied and lively, and enlivening. Reginald was quite astounded with the numbers of the sportsmen who were lounging about the edge of the furze, some on horseback, the greater part dismounted, all waiting in anxious expectation of Mr Hooker's arrival. Old Tom Smith, the huntsman, stood in the midst of his dogs cracking his whip, flapping his arms, and every now and then cursing the delay in whispers, not loud, but deep. Around him were gathered a dozen or two of the hot-headed young academicians, distinguished, by their scarlet frocks, from the rural squirearchy of the hunt ; for these, Mr Hooker being a clergyman, wore parson's-grey, in compliment to the professional costume which he necessarily brought with him even into the hunting-field. At length, after perhaps twenty minutes suspense, whispers of, " the venerable," " the venerable," " here comes the venerable Hooker," passed from groupe to groupe. Tom Smith, doffing his upper Benjamin, bestrode his pawing bay ; the whining dogs, with erected ears, seemed conscious of the

master's approach ; and Parson Hooker trotted briskly into the midst of the expectants, mounted on a beautiful roan, well worthy of dividing with his lord the attention of the field, and the honours of the advent.

The venerable Hooker himself was, nevertheless, no despicable representative of a once-numerous breed of churchmen, now, it is to be feared, sorely on the decline, and which, ere another age passes over us, may not improbably be quite extinct. There being both a good estate and a good living in the family, he, a second son, had been destined from infancy for the rectory ; but he had scarcely been inducted into the benefice ere his elder brother died, so that a double burden of cares had, during the last five-and-thirty years, reposed on his shoulders. These, though not broad, were stout, and the Rector-Squire now looked at sixty as gay an old fellow as if he had been a younger brother all his days. A little red face, red all over, but reddest about the nose,

“ If nose it might be called which was no nose,”

or at least one of the most diminutive specimens

that ever formed the handle of a Christian physiognomy—a pair of small sharp grey eyes—a beautiful set of teeth, continually exposed—a rough black beard—a tight shape, encumbered, however, by something that, had the man and his appurtenances been on a larger scale, would have been called a pot-belly—thin nervous shanks—a stature of barely five feet—well made and better worn top-boots—spruce buckskin breeches—a dark-grey frock, with black-paper buttons—and a shovel-hat, with a suitable rose in front. Imagine all these little particulars, and, as Gil Blas says, “*Voilà mon oncle !*” A dapper curate, and a couple of stylish grooms, formed the “personal escort,” or “tail,” of this ecclesiastical chief.

Both Chisney and Stukeley had often hunted with the jolly parson before, so that Reginald was introduced and welcomed without difficulty. “Ah ! Hooker,” cried one of the squirearchy, “what think ye of to-day, Hooker ? What a capital sermon that was you gave us, Hooker ! D—n me, ’twill lie to a certainty, Hooker——” But Mr Hooker had no leisure for compliments ; two or three old good ones were in a twinkling deep in

the furze—and Tom Smith and the Rector—for no one else stirred—had work enough on their throats. A melodious roar from Sackbut, ere long, brought “Hark, hark !” from the confident divine. Cymbal, Shalm, and Psaltery joined instantaneously in the “musical din.” Exactly at eleven o’clock Reynard broke cover, and away, away went priest and layman, squire, curate, batchelor, and freshman—a beautiful field of at least three-score—away over bush and furze, bog and briar, hedge and style, ditch and double ditch—away over turf and fallow, sand, clay, and gravel—away, away, away,

“Tramp, tramp across the stubble,
Splash, splash across the dubble.”

All other lunacy is stoicism compared to it. The very breeze seemed on fire. Intellect. quickened to intuition, distinguished not the leap from the gallop—every member felt the kindling stream of an all-subduing, all-overwhelming inspiration :—the heart that had never glowed before glowed now, and that which had ever glowed, oh ! how did it burn within the bosom ! The world had been a

shadow—life had never been joy, passion, rapture, ecstasy, till now.

Our hero really acquitted himself upon this occasion in a style worthy of the name. The music of hound and horn, (for that last noble accompaniment of the English chase had not been banished from Parson Hooker's establishment, as has been too frequently the case of late,) these had not merely excited, they had maddened him. Utterly careless, utterly fearless, the boy dashed at every thing, and was baulked by nothing. From the beginning, he had sense enough to make The Venerable his guide; and, thanks to that sagacious determination, Reginald, after the chase had lasted for a couple of hours, and after almost all the academical red-coats, Stukeley among the rest, had lost themselves amidst woods and windings, found himself galloping in the still unbaffled van, Reynard, for the second time, full in view, at the distance of a few fields, and the greater part of the pack in full cry behind him. The despairing animal made now at last for Isis, and Reginald was one of the very few who dared the wintry stream without hesitation. Poor Reynard, miser-

rably wearied as he was, contrived to gain the hill, and made right for Bagley wood, hound and horseman considerably distanced. On pushed the resolute youth—a wide ditch, or rather stream, with a high stony bank, threw back for a moment even the parson himself; but Reginald, ignorant of the danger, spurred on, and his noble steed flung himself freely, with a desperate effort. The chest met the rough high bank, and the fine animal, who had miscalculated his distance, snapped his spine in the cause. Reginald was found, after a time, quite senseless on the bank, and when the boy recovered himself, guess his horror when he heard the worthy Rector issuing to his huntsman the humane and unavoidable mandate, to ride to the nearest house, and bring a gun to put the noble creature out of pain.

Ere then the fox had met his fate, so that, as soon as this, which could not be deferred, was done, our youth found all about him (they were not many) ready to disperse, and take their departure homewards. Parson Hooker, bestowing a thousand commendations, calling him a good one, a

right one, and I know not by how many affectionate epithets besides, invited him to mount one of his servants' horses, and go home with him to Sidlingham. But Reginald's phrenzied vein of gladness had been effectually exhausted; he felt his body weary and bruised, and the accident which had befallen his friend's favourite horse, while in his keeping, was of itself sufficient to call up more melancholy and uneasy thoughts than his philosophy could easily enable him to master. He resisted, therefore, all the kind Hooker's entreaties, and would accept of nothing, except a guide to the highway. A sudden thought struck him, however, after the parson had ridden to some little distance, and the boy ran after him with a swiftness which, the moment before, he should not have imagined himself to be capable of exerting. His object was only to ask from the parson a promise, that neither he nor any of his people would mention anything of what had happened; and this there was no difficulty of obtaining, although some surprise was testified when the request was made known. Once more a friendly farewell was exchanged, and Reginald, rejoin-

ing the country boy who had been retained as his guide, gained ere long, although proceeding as yet at a pace of no great briskness, an eminence, from which he could see not only the line of the Abingdon road, but the towers and domes of Oxford rising distinctly at some few miles distance from the plain below.

Reginald walked down the hill, and onwards through the woods of Bagley, with a heart full of heaviness, but, at the same time, in spite both of exhausted spirits, and of much bodily fatigue, with the firm and unflagging steps of one who feels that he has that before him which must be done. The conflict of busy thoughts within, kept him almost unconscious of anything that was passing without and around him ; and it was with surprise, more than any other feeling, that he at length found himself upon the Bridge of Isis, and at the threshold of the city, which had, as it seemed to him but a very short time before, appeared a far-off object upon the verge of the horizon.

Dinner was over in the hall of * * *, and Reginald, after swallowing a hasty morsel in his room, made it his first business to discover

where Stukely was. Being informed that he had gone to spend the evening with Mr Chisney, our youth immediately changed his dress, and putting the good Squire of Grypherwast's purse, and all the money he was master of, in his pocket, proceeded to join his friends at Christ-Church.

By whatever effort he might have obtained such command over himself, he entered Chisney's apartments with an air and aspect of perfect gaiety. The young men of whom the party consisted, had all been at the cover that morning ; but, at different stages of the chace, they had, without exception, been thrown out, and they were, at the moment when he made his appearance, busied in a thousand conjectures as to the issue of the field, and the further progress of the freshman, whose bold riding at the commencement of the day had so much excited their admiration.

Reginald was, of course, at no great loss to satisfy their curiosity as to all the particulars of the chace ; and when he had detailed them to an end, he, and the horse which had carried him, were equally the subjects of much applause. The boy, after listening to them for a time in silence, struck

gaily into their tone, and, to the no small astonishment of Chisney, declared that he had never known what pleasure was until he had seen a fox-chace; that he was resolved to hunt henceforth regularly twice a-week during the season, and that he would gladly give a long price to be master of such a horse as that which had enabled him to cut so respectable a figure at his *debut*. Dick Stukeley, who liked nothing so well as a horse, except only the pleasure of making a bargain about one, was not slow to perceive his drift. He would not have parted with Dinah Gray, he said, no, not for the world, to any other man; but really Dalton had shewn off Dinah, and Dinah had shewn off Dalton to so great advantage, that he should consider it shabby to stand in the way of a more permanent connexion. In short, after a great deal of bush-hunting, Mr Stukeley at last named his price—and truly no very modest one that was. Reginald caught him at the word, however, counted out the money upon the instant, and returned into his pocket one of the lightest purses that ever kept a heavy heart company.

The deed, however, being fairly done, the spi-

rits which a resolved purpose had sustained, began, ere long, to sink far beyond the reach of bumpers. After an hour or so had elapsed, Reginald declared he felt himself so much knocked up with the day's exertions, that he must needs go home to his bed. Stukeley, and some other stronger men who had gone through less work than he, ridiculed him a little for this unworthy manner of terminating a day so glorious ; but the freshman had earned some respect among them all by his horsemanship, and their expostulations were not continued when it was found that he was quite in earnest.

To complete poor Reginald's misery, when he reached his own rooms again, a letter from his father was lying for him upon the table. He thrust it away from him at first—but opened it after a time, and read with dim eyes enough to add new keenness to every wound in his bosom. Every kind word—every tender affectionate idea—was gall and wormwood. But when he came to read of the high hopes with which Mr Barton's letters had inspired the good man, of the praises which had been bestowed on himself, his diligence, his

ardour, his regularity—then indeed he could stand it no longer. Another letter was also lying on his table; he was not acquainted with the hand-writing, and, disgusted with himself, and with all the world, he opened it with listless fingers, not dreaming that it could contain any thing capable of interesting him. The inclosure was, however, a very kind note from old Keith. The good Priest said in it, that he had called at Mr Dalton's rooms, and found him from home—that the object of his visit had been to ask if his young friend would partake of a quiet dinner with him the next day. "It is Christmas day," said he, "and as you have no relations of your own here, you will scarcely know what to do with yourself." Little did the old Priest know of the course of life in which Reginald was engaged—least of all did he suspect that Christmas day is at * * * the merriest in all the year. However, as it happened, our youth was in a mood to prefer any thing to such a scene as, from all he had heard, a College *Gaudy* was like to be; and Reginald wrote, without hesitation, his acceptance of the invitation. Having done so, he extinguished his light, and

never sat deeper and more painful sadness on the pillow of youth—and, after all that has occurred, we may still say, of innocence.

CHAPTER II.

REGINALD arose very early the next morning—still melancholy and dejected, but cooled and calmed from the first fever of self-reproach which had burned upon his brow over night. The Chapel bell was already ringing, and he resolved to be present at the morning service—a duty which, among others, he had for several weeks very much neglected.

There had been a considerable fall of snow during the night, and at that early hour nothing could be more dreary than the dim quadrangle below, and the damp echoes of the cloister along which he had to walk. But when he entered the Chapel, though all was solemnity, there was nothing of dreariness in the scene. According to the custom of that sacred season—a custom derived no doubt from the primitive ages of Christianity, and still appealing, in every uncorrupted

bosom, to a thousand delightful feelings of our nature—the little Chapel was everywhere adorned with green branches, and those bright glossy leaves and berries, amidst the light of the tapers, and the thrilling notes of the organ, blended something of the placid, and even of the cheerful, with emotions of a deeper and a more awful character.

The majesty of the service itself came sweetened to the ear by the music of so many young voices ; and ancient as the edifice was, there was enough, in whatever direction the eye might be turned, to recall the idea that it was for the purposes of young devotion its venerable altar had been reared. Young faces and young voices were all around, and the walls above were loaded with the funereal mementos of departed youth. Here the cold sepulchral marble preserved the shadow of manhood cut short but the year before, in its first opening bloom of promise—and there perhaps the faint beams of morning, struggling through the deep colours of a window, glimmered upon the heraldic ensigns of some juvenile inmate, whose grateful piety had centuries before bequeathed the rich blazonry.

“ ‘ Sweet is the holiness of youth,’ so felt
Time-honour’d Chaucer, when he framed the lay,
By which the Prioress beguiled the way,
And many a pilgrim’s rugged heart did melt.”

As Reginald knelt here amidst the memorials of the dead, and joined his voice in the solemn responses of the living, a breath of peace and comfort seemed to be wafted into his soul, and he retired, when the service was over, to his solitary chamber, full not only of the same virtuous resolves which he had brought with him, but restored, in a great measure, to that equal and placid frame of mind, in the absence of which the best resolutions are but the arrows of a trembling hand, grasped indeed with a convulsive energy, but soon lost in vain efforts, or dropt in the vainer listlessness of despair.

Reginald locked himself in his room, and having no occasion to attend his tutor on a holiday, devoted the solitary hours of his morning to more serious study than he had for a long time been much acquainted with. In vain came twenty thundering knocks to his door—in vain did Stukeley, Chisney, and many more of his gay associates,

strain their voices in screaming to him through his key-hole ; he resisted every art and every violence, and, busied among his books and papers, enjoyed every laborious hour more than that which had gone before it. What plans did he sketch out for himself—how minutely did he mark the occupations of months to come—how triumphantly did he sum up the results of his future diligence—how tenderly did he contemplate the pleasure with which he should meet his dear father, after having executed all that he now promised to himself !—He had had for some days a little College exercise in Latin verse to prepare, and now, his spirits quickened and sustained by all the buoyancy of youthful hope and ambition, the task, which he had deferred longer than he should have done, seemed, when fairly grappled withal, to have been a luxury neglected. With what delight did he walk up and down his room, repeating a dozen sonorous hexameters when they were finished ! Smile not, gentle reader, he was but a boy ; and Buffon, the great Buffon, in the fulness of years and honours, confessed that he knew no earthly pleasure so great, as stalking at evening beneath

a favourite row of elms, and declaiming to himself the paragraphs which he had spent the morning in elaborating.

His labours being completed, while all the courts of * * * were resounding with the notes of festive preparation, our youth made his escape unnoticed, and walked swiftly over the snow to the suburb of St Clements. The sun had just gone down, and Ellen Hesketh was at the parlour window when he approached the house. She opened it, and bade him turn ere he entered, and look for a moment at the scene which she had been contemplating. He did so, and enjoyed it not the less, surely, because her fine eyes were partakers in the beauty which lay beneath his view. The western sky, yet bright with the richest crimson, had diffused a tint soft and brilliant as that of virgin rose-leaves over the hills, while the wide plain below slept in uniform and dazzling whiteness. Between him and the gorgeous sunset, the stately groves of Oxford stood tall and black, while outlines of gold and amethyst graced every slender pinnacle and minaret, and spire and dome,

that reared itself above them against the glowing horizon. The great bell of Christ-church was heard distinctly

“Swinging slow its solemn roar”—

over tower and tree, and a host of humbler belfries joined one by one in the cathedral note.

“Hark !” said Ellen, “how grand is the effect of that simplest of all harmonies !”

“Grand indeed !” quoth Reginald—“and what a scene of beauty !”

Miss Hesketh sighed very deeply, and the boy, almost unconscious of what he was saying, said, “What is there to make you melancholy in the sight of such a sunset ?”

The girl blushed, and was silent for a moment, and then said, more as if to herself than to him, “When I look down on all these spires and domes, and hear so many bells ringing, I could almost think I was in Fulda, dear Fulda, once again—if it were not for the want of the Forest. But, ah me, I shall never see Fulda again, nor walk among the old woods that I loved so well !”

“ You regret the scenes of earlier days,” said Reginald.

“ Ay, Mr Dalton,” she answered; “ and who would not regret them? But why should I speak thus to *you*? you have never seen Fulda, nor the Rhine, nor Germany, my country.”

“ Nay, Miss Hesketh, you must not call that your country, even though you love it so well. You are English, and this is England.”

“ I am not English, Mr Dalton, and this is not my country;—but come away, for I hear my uncle, and he will be ready for his dinner.”

Reginald with this entered the house, the door of which Miss Hesketh, with her own hand, opened to him—the only domestic they entertained being busied in the kitchen. The good priest joined them the next moment—the curtains were drawn close, the fire stirred, and the candles lighted, and in a few minutes a neat, but plentiful board was ready for their reception. A dumb waiter did the duty of a servant more agreeably than any servant can ever do in so small a party; and the two young people were equally gratified when they had any opportunity of making them-

selves useful to the kind old gentleman, who had, to say truth, been a good deal fatigued by the voluminous services of a Catholic Christmas-day. His spirits, however, carried no trace of weariness, and when the board was cleared, and they had drawn their chairs round the fire-side, Ellen fetched him his pipe, and he was as gay as a lark. "Now, my dear lassie," he said, "put down a bottle of the Rhine wine that came from Hartwell, and we'll let Mr Dalton taste a glass or two, ere we call on you for the guitar and the Rhine song."

While Ellen was fetching the precious flask which the knowing priest had planted some hours before in the snow, he explained to Reginald that he had been visiting, the week before, the Count de Lisle, (now Louis XVIII.) then resident in the next county to Oxfordshire, and that his Majesty had been so kind as to have his post-chaise filled when he departed with some of that dear German luxury, which he could now very ill afford to purchase for himself. Reginald, it may be supposed, did not relish the rich Rudelsheimer at

all the less, because it had come from the cellars of a Prince and a Bourbon ; but perhaps he filled his green glass with yet increased devotion, after hearing from the lips of Ellen Hesketh that splendid song, which the Genius of Haydn has made almost the “ God Save the King” of Germany.

“ The Rhine ! the Rhine ! be blessings on the Rhine !
St Rochus bless the land of love and wine,
Its groves, and high-hung meads, whose glories shine
In painted waves below ;
Its rocks, whose topaz beam betrays the vine,
Or richer ruby glow ;
The Rhine ! the Rhine ! be blessings on the Rhine !
Beats there a sad heart here, pour pour the wine !” &c.

Miss Hesketh’s voice was one of those which cannot give utterance even to a strain of festivity, without investing it with such a depth of feeling as is always answered by emotions, serious to the verge at least of melancholy. Whoever has heard that melody, even from a very indifferent performer, will acknowledge that a certain sorrowfulness is mingled in its flow ; and to Reginald’s ear, now for the first time receiving it, it sounded far more like the expression of regret for a lost coun-

try, than that of exultation in one possessed and enjoyed. The chief beauty of the voice consisted in the trembling richness of its very low notes ; and while she sung, her eye swam with a liquid enthusiasm, kindling at once and saddening.— Her cheeks, very pale in general, caught from the excitement a momentary flush, so exquisitely delicate in brilliancy, that no other hue in animate or inanimate nature could be compared to it ; and that again, the instant she paused, passed away like a cloud, leaving the living marble as white as ever. Reginald's gaze, quite unconscious of its steadfastness, called back, after a moment's interval, a yet deeper rush of blood into her fair cheek ; and the boy blushed too, and dropped his own eye-lids with confusion still more painful than that his untutored glance had excited. But the good priest had filled the glasses, which he taught our youth the true German method of ringing against each other for the pledge, and the old man's quiet gaiety soon restored the young people to all their self-possession.

Ellen, after a little while, left the gentlemen to themselves, and Mr Keith conversed in a father-

ly manner with Reginald about his college, his pursuits, his occupations. The young man, his heart rejoicing in the opportunity of opening itself, told him very fairly, that he found it a very difficult thing to fix himself upon his studies in a place where he was so much surrounded with temptations to idleness—that hitherto he had yielded to these in a way which he was ashamed of—but that this very day he had commenced another career, and that he hoped and trusted he should be successful in adhering to it. “For indeed, sir,” he said—“indeed, sir, I am quite weary of the noise and tumult in which I have been living. Your quiet home has recalled *home* to my recollections—I have not been for weeks so happy as you have made me this day—for what clamorous pleasures are worthy of the name of happiness? How I envy you your calm life, sir!”

The worthy senior, while Reginald was talking in this style, listened with a look of great kindness; but at the same time there was something on his lips that seemed as if it might almost have grown into a smile, had the discourse proceeded. He answered, however, gaily and inspi-

ritingly, "I see how it is, my young friend—I see perfectly well how the matter stands. You've been kicking up a terrible racket among you, and you're wearied of it; but, my man, one cannot sow all the wild oats without turning the furrow—ye'll just go on again, and then stop, and then on again, until the job's done; and then you'll sit your ways down, and have quietness enough when your time's come for it."

"You speak so cheerfully, sir," said Reginald, "because you have reached the time of quiet yourself, and are free from troubles and cares."

"Hoolie and fairly," quoth the Priest—"my bonny young lad, I have my troubles and my cares as well as my neighbours. I warrant you, you have a fine notion of what cares are at your time of day.—What would you think, now, of finding yourself wearing away, going fast down the hill of life, my bird, and seeing a child of your own, or one that you liked as if she was such—a lassie like Ellen Hesketh, we shall suppose—about to be left alone in the world, poor maybe, as she is sure to be at the best of it, and without any body to look after her?—Nay, nay, my dear, your trouble

are to begin yet, ye may take my word for that—
But keep a good heart—no wisdom in sinking ;
keep a good stout heart, and do your duty to God
and man, and no fears of you.”

Miss Hesketh, re-entering the parlour, cut short the lecture of the old gentleman, and gave perhaps a new turn to the thoughts of the young one. There was, however, no lack of conversation. Keith took a sportive sort of pleasure in making the young man talk of his college, and the girl of her cloister, and in comparing and contrasting the feelings which the several experiences of monastic and demi-monastic life had left upon their minds. Ellen spoke with such regretful enthusiasm of the good Abbess and sisters of St Anthony's, that Reginald could not help seeing the young lady entertained a strong predilection for the religious life ; and this very perceptible partiality for what seemed so little worthy of so young and fair a creature, and so little likely to have attracted her imagination, together with some of the hints which Mr Keith had dropped about her future prospects, was enough to make the young man peruse the pensive lines of her downcast beauty with an ever deepening interest.

Altogether Reginald was so much pleased and so much interested, that he would scarcely have left the Priest's fireside at nine o'clock, had not the old gentleman himself said something about the fatigues of the day, which he could not avoid taking as a sort of hint. He was not suffered to go, however, until he had promised over and over again to be less a stranger for the future; and when he did find himself once more alone upon his way, his fancy still clung to and lingered upon the scene which he had quitted. As he walked through the dark and silent city, he felt as if he had never before been so completely alone in the world; and yet when he had entered his own College, the glare of lights, and the sounds of jovial mirth which met him there, had that about them which was a thousand times less in harmony with the tone of his thoughts. He could not reach his room without passing close by the windows of that stately refectory where all the young men of * * * were celebrating, with wine and wassail, the memory of the Sainted Prelate, who had reared four centuries ago the venerable roof under which they were sitting. The clamour of voices—the boisterous cho-

rus—the drunken laugh, fell upon an ear that had been toned for very different melodies ; and the boy, hurrying swiftly beyond the reach of all that odious tumult, locked himself once more in a solitary chamber—where, drawing his chair to the fire-side, he sat down to lose himself in such waking dreams as total silence, and a dim red light, and the memory of Ellen Hesketh, might, among them, be pleased to inspire and prolong.

CHAPTER III.

THESE good dispositions held their sway for a period of greater length than the reader may perhaps have expected to hear of. For three weeks our youth devoted himself zealously and passionately to his studies, and seldom left his apartment except when his duties required him to do so. Mr Chisney, the great tempter, never met him without doing all he could to induce him to join some gay party ; but he resisted all his arguments, and, which was far more difficult, all his jeers.

During this period of virtuous retirement, Reginald called twice or thrice at Mr Keith's ; but it so happened, that he always found the old Priest from home, and he did not venture to inquire for Miss Hesketh in his absence. He did not think it right for him to intrude upon them in the evening ; but more than once, after a laborious day, he walked out in the dusk, and came

near enough the windows to catch the echoes of Ellen's voice, as she was accompanying her guitar for her uncle's amusement. That voice once heard, need it be said, that the boy lingered until it could be heard no more? But even when all was silence, often would he linger there, or walk alone in the star-light, beneath the wintry elms of Heddington, keeping his eye upon the small obscure roof beneath which he had once been so happy.

However, this life lasted, after all, for no more than three weeks. By this time Reginald had acquired so much confidence in himself, that he ventured to accept of an invitation from Stukeley, —who, by the way, had made, after he learned the true history of poor Dinah Gray, many generous but vain efforts to force back Reginald's money upon him.—Alas! that invitation led to others, and, the broad barrier once removed, the interior fortifications made but a slender defence. In brief, he soon plunged more deeply than ever into the stream of dissipation—and, not to waste many words upon a disagreeable subject, he found himself ere long involved in an inextricable maze

of such difficulties, as that precocious dissipation seldom fails to heap on those who indulge in it.

It must be confessed, even by the austere who reflects calmly upon his own experiences, that there are few situations wherein poor human nature is exposed to a more engaging species of seduction, than that in which our young man found himself. There is a kindness, a genuine openness of heart, about such youthful votaries of pleasure, as those who surrounded him, much more difficult to be repelled with coldness, than all the finished blandishments of fashionable and practised voluptuaries. The total absence of all art and all concealment—the readiness with which every thought is revealed—the warmth with which every disappointment is partaken—the unfettered intercommunion of all feelings, gay or serious—there is a charm about these simple snares, effectually to baffle which, requires perhaps either a colder temper than nature had bestowed upon young Dalton, or a much sadder burden of experience, than had as yet been pressed upon him by the doings of the world. His temperament, sanguine to excess, fitted him to be the plaything of

his passions. His quick imagination heightened indeed the severity of his occasional regrets ; but it was equally ready to heighten the promise of the coming, or the relish of the present, indulgence. His brilliant spirits made him the favourite of all in the hour of enjoyment, and they made him the favourite object of every seductive art, in those calmer hours when his own reflections were gloomy. The new excitement was ever near to chase the languor which that of yesterday had bequeathed—and he had not as yet “descended into himself,” as the philosopher phrases it—he had not bought the skill to trace his own actions to their secret springs ; and if the stronger impulses were things he sometimes dreaded, he certainly had not taught himself to guide those more easy of guidance, less violent indeed in their operation, but sometimes not less dangerous in their remote effects.

Had Reginald been possessed of a fortune, or had he been the son of a rich man, such boyish extravagances, as he was ere long led into, might have been well repaid in the main by the lessons of various kinds which, in spite of himself, he

must have been taught even during the period of these indulgences. Nay, had Oxford been like almost any other city in the world, a boy, such as he was, could scarcely have found the means to carry his extravagances to any thing like a dangerous, not to say, a ruinous extent. But whoever knows the place, is well aware that no limit is affixed by tradesmen to the credit which they grant, and while the honourable conduct which has established this system cannot be too highly praised, it must be admitted, that, in regard to the young men themselves, such a system, so thoroughly established, is fraught with temptations very hard to be resisted, and, when not resisted, entailing consequences that too often cost hard enough after-struggles, ere they are altogether got rid of. He, entirely unaccustomed as he had been to the management of money, and of course extremely ignorant as to its value, did what ninety-nine out of a hundred, in a similar situation, would have done, and, it is to be feared, always will do—he yielded to temptations, the consequences of which he had had no previous opportunity of estimating; and, long before the season when he was to re-

turn to Lannwell came round, he had incurred a debt which he knew, on reflection, must be great, but which he had not the courage to calculate exactly. It must be quite unnecessary to descend into particulars. He had drank and rioted—he had hunted—above all, he had betted and gamed at Cockpits and bull-baitings, and sparring-matches, and I know not what besides. No man, the first year he spends in Oxford, has much chance to become acquainted, from his own experience, with the frown of what the academical Muse of “the Splendid Shilling” calls the

“Horrible monster, abhorr’d of gods and men!”

But this, as we have hinted, was just one of the most unfortunate of all the circumstances that surrounded him ; for had Reginald been dunned, he certainly must have soon enough learned to dread the idea of debt.

His friends about him were, as he very soon discovered, much more deeply in debt than himself. Such of them as had attained any considerable standing, were occasionally honoured with visits of an unpleasant nature ; but all this

seemed to be treated by them so perfectly in the light of a jest—there was such a flow of witticisms about “sporting oak,” &c.—and such total *non-chalance* in the air with which these were uttered, that our poor youth might be pardoned in so far, if he caught the language—which always infers catching, at least to a certain extent, the manner of thinking—of the place where he was, and of the associates with whom he was so continually surrounded.

There existed, moreover, at Oxford, at that particular period, a source of idleness and dissipation, of which the present race of academical youth have probably lost even the recollection. Among the first volunteer corps raised, when the French invasion was threatened, had been one consisting entirely of members of the University—and though the fogleman was a reverend Fellow, and almost all the officers Masters of Arts, perhaps a finer volunteer regiment never mustered upon English ground. That corps, however, I know not well for what reason, had been broken up about a year before Reginald came to Oxford. On its dissolution, a great number of the young

gentlemen who had figured in its ranks, full of that martial enthusiasm which then burned all over the country, had solicited and obtained the permission of their superiors to join the regiment of the city. It is possible that they had been encouraged to do this from the praise-worthy notion, that the intercourse which must follow might tend to nourish kindly feelings among classes of people who had heretofore been too much disunited. Be that as it might, Chisney, among many others, had become a private in the Oxford volunteers, and he, ardent in whatever he meddled with, had soon risen to the station of a serjeant among them. One of the first things he did, after Reginald's entrance, was to enlist him. Our youth, ere the winter was over, was Chisney's corporal—and he had not attained that distinction without having shewn his ability in the mess-suppers at the Lamb's head, as well as in the skirmishes of the Port Meadow. In a word, he had become as great a favourite among these volunteers, as among his fellow collegians—and the variety of the scenes into which their company led him,

acted as a stimulus, alike powerful and dangerous, at times when the sameness of mere academical dissipation might, but for such intervention, have chanced to pall upon his appetite.

Every now and then, during this season of folly, Reginald was invited to spend a day at Mr Keith's. For the most part he was the only guest at the Priest's table, but occasionally an old emigrant Abbé, or the like, was also present. From every visit to that quiet fire-side, our youth returned disgusted with himself, and full of good resolutions. These feelings soon evaporated under the influences of which we have already heard perhaps more than enough ; but other feelings, not quite so evanescent, received their food in the same place ; and the idea of Ellen Hesketh, associated as it was with the only captivating images of quiet, and repose, and innocence, that Oxford presented to his view, gradually took possession of his heart and fancy with a power not the less deep, because he was half unconscious of its sway.

A timid, a fearful, a reverent adoration it was with which he regarded what circumstances had

conspired to make his only symbol of virtue and loveliness united. Her presence never failed to agitate him with a thousand mingled emotions, amongst which the serious and the melancholy were not wanting. But how different that gentle seriousness, that sweet melancholy, from the harsher pangs of self-reproach and remorse that at other times flashed through a bosom, whose original purity had become tarnished, while its tender sensitiveness still remained unseared and unhardened beneath a surface no longer worthy of its delicacy? Her voice—her deep melodious voice—thrilled his soul with a sorrowful luxury; her soft clear eye darted sad and solemn inspirations into his perplexed and struggling breast. He gazed on her as on something which he durst not presume to love—he listened with a pensive breathlessness, a far-off hopeless humility of devotion—the blood forsook his cheek while he gazed, and while he listened tears would have gushed over his pale cheeks, if they durst.

Elsewhere, all the charms even of Ellen Hesketh might easily have failed in producing such

an intense seriousness of passion in the bosom of a young man whose nature rendered him sufficiently liable to the entertainment of all strong emotions, and from whose breast, therefore, one kind of emotion was ever ready enough to chase another ; but in Oxford she was alone. The young gentlemen who pursue their studies there, are safe, for the most part at least, from one species of interruption, the effects of which, both good and bad, are largely and continually experienced in almost all other places of the kind. Reginald, it is certain, saw nothing, or almost nothing, of such female society as might have been likely to scatter over a more extended surface those feelings which, as we have seen, were, in his case, concentrated from the beginning upon one beautiful object. Though his handsome person procured for our youth invitations to a few female parties in Oxford, there was about these nothing that could leave any impression other than of a ludicrous character upon his fancy. To the excellent female society which of course is to be found in such a place, he chanced to have no access ; he saw only the little *tea-and-turnout* given

by some venerable spinster or dowager, the heirless or the relict of some defunct doctor, where a few old tutors play shilling whist with grandmothers, and a few beardless boys flirt with belles, who have flirted, in all likelihood, with their fathers before them ; and what wonder that he turned, as from a penance, to the roaring joviality of a juvenile supper-party ? The dame who had at first condescended to invite him, was one of those who, by continually associating with the permanent pedants of the place, have acquired a sort of tutorial stateliness of manner, a formal and deliberate style of enunciating nothings, a cold lofty look, a dull haughty eye, and a certain solemnity of stupidity, than which earth holds nothing more risible. In her, too, as in some others of the same class, these engaging attributes were accompanied with a degree of fatness, and a bloated or blowsy complexion, such as might testify abundantly that high feeding, &c., can go on elsewhere than at “ high tables.” The superannuated sort of attempts at flirtation which are occasionally observed diverting one of these dangerous nymphs, and some old unwieldy canon, in the recess of a Go-

thic window — their antediluvian jokes — their compliments plagiarised from Sir Charles Grandison—their drowsy simpers and their laborious fondlings, are essentially things more calculated, it is true, for creating pity than laughter. But the gown and cassock (for Oxonians of all ranks wear their full costume at an Oxonian rout) spread an air of irresistible mirth over doings even of this pitiable kind,—

“ Lo ! Venus sits in semblance of a nun,
And purple Bacchus hooded like a friar.”

An enormous wig and flowing bands seem so strange accompaniments to a card-table—and a square cap, with a long black tuft, in one hand, forms so odd a contrast to the playfully-abstracted fan, with which the reverend Doctor's other plump little hand is dallying.

To say truth, the Oxford ladies of the second rank are by no means captivating. Even when their years have not been formidably many, the habits of being flirted with by transient hundreds, and made love to (serious love I mean) by nobody, have impressed a sort of cold cautiousness upon

their virgin smiles ; discontent, disappointment, hope deferred, soon plant premature wrinkles about the brightest eye, and wreath lips of no contemptible richness, with a sneer as hopelessly malicious as ever was that of spinsterly threescore. Among these ladies, therefore, there is too frequently little but superficial display—a cold artificial reserve, or, worse still, a style of forced gaiety, suggesting so immediately the ideas of the hackneyed and *useé* existence from which it has been derived, that perhaps the younger the belle is, her charms are really so much the less likely to prove killing.

The prevalent conversation at the two or three parties of this sort where our Reginald, in his ignorance of better things, made his appearance, consisted of the most worn-out common-places of gallantry, or of eternal prosings about degrees, benefices, doctorates, and deaneries. The politicians of them prated not of Parliament, but of the Latin speeches against Popery in the Convocation. The bluestockings' babble was not of the popular literature of this or of any age, past or to come, but of White's Bampton Lectures, Mant's

Amorous Lyrics, an epigram that had set all Brazen-nose in a roar, or a prize-essay that had added new glories to Oriel. They were more occupied about the vacant bishoprick than the opening campaign; and there was more triumph in the expulsion of one juvenile heretic, than in the expected restoration of three exiled legitimates.

Miss Hesketh's modest charms, charms which had never been sullied by the breath of the gaudy heartless world—charms, above all, which, such was the retirement in which Mr Keith necessarily lived, might almost be said to exist here for Reginald alone—these young and gentle charms presented a contrast to all this, the effects of which we shall leave the reader to picture for himself, if indeed enough has not been said already to give some guidance to his imagination.

CHAPTER IV.

THE gay winter, the gayer spring had passed away—the summer was now approaching to its richest period of splendour—and, in the course of two days, Reginald was to bid adieu for a season to the scene of all his follies, and return for several months to the sequestered valley where he had first breathed the air of heaven, and where so many careless and happy summers had flown over his head. The remittance which was to furnish him with the means of travelling to the north, had been received the day before, in a letter, the overflowing kindness of which had given birth in Reginald's bosom to many emotions, besides those which the good Vicar had contemplated while addressing his distant son from the little library at Lannwell—that abode of innocence, unhaunted as yet by suspicion. Revolving in shame and in sorrow the manner in which his time had, for the

most part, been wasted, and with alarm no longer to be checked, the consequences which his folly had entailed upon him, and upon his too-confiding parent, our young man had spent a long miserable morning in solitude, and yet made but little progress in those preparations which his approaching journey required, but to which the internal conflict of so many troublesome meditations had prevented him from giving any steady or efficient application. The dinner-bell surprised him at his unfinished task—its sound reproached his slowness; but he was weary of reproaches, and he obeyed the summons with a sort of half-sulky determination to fling his cares aside, and be Reginald himself again, “until a more convenient season.”

He dined, therefore, gay to all appearance among the gay; and when dinner was over, and the usual circle had assembled round their wines and their ices beneath one of the fine old beeches of the College garden, it was he who laughed the loudest, and filled the most overflowing bumper. It was a Saturday evening, as it happened, and the young men were all obliged to quit their bot-

tle for a time, when the chapel bell rung out. During the quiet interval which followed, Reginald, restored to those melancholy reflections, which he had made shift to toss from him amidst jovial faces, became so much depressed, that he resisted, when the service was over, every solicitation, and would not again join the party on the green. He had drank enough ere he left the shadow of the beech to fire his brain, though not to discompose his nerves, and now, that excitement having given place to the languor, which in some measure follows all excitements, he strolled forth alone in a mood of tenfold dejection, if not of tenfold bitterness.

Reginald wished to be alone, yet he dreaded the cheerless solitude of his chamber, and he resolved to go down to the river and row himself in a skiff until it should be dark. He walked hastily through the town, but found, much to his mortification, on reaching Mother Davies's, that every boat of every description was out, or engaged. After standing, therefore, for some time by the side of the Isis, gazing idly and vacantly upon the gay scene which its crowded waters presented,

he turned himself once more homewards, more fretted, it may be supposed, than he was likely to have been by so trivial a disappointment in any more genial mood.

He had traversed the winding path of the meadow, and was about to pass through the courts of Christ-Church, that he might shun the bustle of the great Walk, when all of a sudden it occurred to him that he had business enough on his hands for the next day ; and that if he did not take this opportunity of paying a visit to St Clement's, he should perhaps have to quit Oxford without bidding farewell to the good Priest, whose kindnesses had been so unremitting—and without seeing Ellen Hesketh.

He proceeded, therefore, along that magnificent avenue, formed long ago by the ever-princely taste of Wolsey, which, at such an hour, presents certainly one of the grandest, and at the same time one of the gayest of spectacles. The high over-arching branches, clothed in all the luxuriance of June, allowed scarcely one spot of the blue sky over-head to be visible ; but between the tall massive trunks of the gigantic elms on the right, the

bright meadow, and the gleaming river, with its hundred gliding boats and painted barges, lay full in view ; while the descending sun streamed a full yellow radiance all down the broad path itself, giving to the countless groupings with which through its long extent it was crowded, all the graceful varieties of richest light and softest shadow. The intermixture of so many dark and antique costumes with crimson scarfs and white plumes, and all the splendours of modern dress, produces an effect eminently picturesque, not very unlike that of an old Italian street in an evening of the Carnival, where a thousand black dominos and gaudy masks are continually chequering each other and contrasted. But indeed the English scene has at least one advantage over the Italian. *There*, all is riot, tumult, jabbering, and squawling—but *here*, the roof of Nature's majestic cathedral hung over an atmosphere as calm as glowing. Every thing was silent, and solemn—as if the beautiful sunset had been illuminating and enriching a picture. The chirping of the birds, and even the lazy hum of the evening insects, were heard

almost as distinctly as if no human footstep had been near them.

The silence was more in accordance with Reginald's mood than the splendour of the scene ; but his imagination had already travelled to St Clement's, and he walked with unconscious rapidity past a hundred slow and lounging groupes, not one face among all which had fixed his notice even for a moment. He kept on at the same pace after he had left the great walk, and so over the Bridge of Magdalene, and until he had come within sight of Mr Keith's roof. He then paused for an instant, and when he resumed his progress, it was with slow and hesitating steps.—At length, however, he reached the threshold, and just touched the knocker. No one answered, and he repeated his knock more loudly—still not the least motion nor whisper from within. A third time he knocked, and a third time nothing but silence ensued.

He now stepped back from the door, and observing that the parlour windows were in part closed, the sudden and painful conviction was forced upon him, that the family were all from

home. Perhaps they have gone to some distance, he said to himself, and may not return for several days. Ten days have passed since I saw Mr Keith—what may not have happened during that interval !

While he was reflecting thus, and reproaching himself for his negligence—one sort of neglect he certainly could not lay to his charge—he observed that the small wicket which leads into the Priest's garden, and through that to the chapel, was unfastened. It then occurred to him that they might possibly be engaged in the celebration of some festival of their church, and he thought there could be no harm in walking through the green, and ascertaining for himself whether any service were really going on in the chapel behind.

The lower windows at the back part of the house were also closed, and there were some little nameless symptoms which gave him more and more the notion of desertion. He stepped slowly over the little green, but had almost stopped when he perceived the Priest's accustomed garden-chair overturned. However, he went on towards the chapel, and when he had passed the thicket of la-

burnums by which it is divided from the garden, he saw that the door was ajar. Afraid of disturbing the congregation, he crept very softly to the threshold, and listened—but here, too, all was silent. He listened patiently for several minutes, and at last heard a cough, and after that a sound not to be mistaken—the scrubbing of a broom. Upon this Reginald took courage, and gently opening the chapel door a little wider, perceived that all was desertion—nobody there but a woman, who, with her back turned towards him, was busily occupied in brushing down cobwebs from about the frame of the altar-piece.

When Reginald's footstep sounded upon the marble floor, she turned round, and screamed,—
“ Mary Mother, preserve us ! ”

“ Don't be alarmed,” said our youth, arresting his steps ; “ I pray you, don't be alarmed. I have only come to inquire after Mr Keith, my girl.”

I know not what induced Reginald to call her *girl* ; for, in point of fact, she was a very comely woman, but could not be under five-and-thirty. She took no offence, however, at the appellation ;—calming herself, she descended the altar-steps

with no sign of terror upon her countenance unless a pretty enough blush might be one. "O, I beg your pardon, sir," she said. "I protest I didn't know who it might be, sir; but Mr Keith's better, sir. My husband was at Witham this morning, and he is a great deal better."

"At Witham! How long has Mr Keith been there? I never heard either of that, or of his being ill."

"Oh! Lord lovey, sir, he has had a sore time of it, indeed. He has been very ill with the fever and ague, sir; and the doctors made him go to Witham-hill on Tuesday, for the change of the air."

"And his niece, Miss Hesketh, is she gone with him?"

"Yes, indeed. Lord bless us, sir! What could the old man do without Miss Hesketh? She nurses him so—you have no notion how kindly she waits on him. Poor young lady, I often think 'tis but a dull life she leads."

"I am just leaving Oxford," said Reginald, very confusedly, "and I wished to see Mr Keith ere I went. Might I call for him at Witham to-

morrow ? Do you think he is well enough to see his friends ?”

“ I’faith, my master, he has so few of them, that I be bound he will be glad to see them even though he were in his bed ; but that he isn’t, for, as I was telling your honour, my husband (Tom Bowdler, your honour) was up to Witham this very day, and saw him.”

“ How shall I find him, ma’am ?”

“ O, your honour, you’ll be at no loss ; just inquire for Widow Wilkinson’s ; ’tis not a stone’s-throw from the ale-house—just by Lord Abingdon’s wall.”

In the course of this little colloquy, Mrs Bowdler had come quite close to Reginald, and a smile had occasionally crossed her blushing cheek, displaying not only perfect confidence in our young man’s civility, but one of the whitest and most regular sets of teeth in the world. He was turning to leave the place as soon as he had received the information of her last response, but something in her look suggested to him that he ought to put his hand into his pocket. He therefore slipped out half-a-crown, and bidding her good-

bye, dropped it into her hanging-sleeve. Upon this Mrs Bowdler blushed, and smiled more sweetly than ever, and holding the piece between her fingers with an air of modest irresolution, she said, with something of a start, “ Lord bless me ! How did you get in, sir ? The servant went out some-time ago, and sure she locked the front-door ere she gave me the key.”

Reginald pointed to the wicket which he had himself left standing quite open ; and with that Mrs Bowdler started again, and said, “ Gracious me ! the wicket unclosed, and I left all this while so !—Goodness preserve me !”

“ Nay,” said Reginald, smiling in his turn, “ I am sure nobody could ever offer any harm to *you*, Mrs Bowdler.”

Mrs Bowdler bit her lips, and looking downwards, said, “ Very well, sir, since the wicket’s open, I need not open the door to let you through the house, however.”

“ Not at all,” said our youth ; “ I beg you won’t give yourself any more trouble ;” and with that he moved again towards the wicket. He had

got within a couple of paces of it, when Mrs Bowdler called after him.

“ Oh, sir—I beg your pardon, sir, but if you really be a-going to Witham to-morrow, there’s a letter here for Mr Keith, and perhaps you would have the goodness to carry it with you—it would save Bowdler walking so far, and he’s not very able for it, poor man, in this weather.”

“ Oh certainly, most certainly,” he answered ;
“ I shall be most happy to take care of the letter for you.”

Mrs Bowdler with this drew the key from the depths of her pocket, and opening the door, apparently not without some little difficulty, preceded Reginald into the house, and through the lobby, into the dim and deserted parlour. The youth stood for a few moments gazing round the room, which contained no piece of furniture that was not familiar and dear to his fancy. The work-table—the guitar-case—the sofa on which Miss Hesketh was accustomed to sit, with some music-books still lying scattered on its cushions—he could have perused them all over for an hour without wearying. He started, however, after a

little time, and said to Mrs Bowdler, who had been standing all the while as idly as himself at his elbow, " Well, ma'am, where is the letter ? I don't see it upon the table."

She walked hastily out of the room, and returned in a moment with the epistle in her hand. Reginald, putting it in his pocket, cast one glance more round the parlour, and hurried out of it so quickly, that he had passed the green, and closed the wicket, ere Mrs Bowdler had stirred from the spot where he received the letter from her hands.

Our youth, not caring to face the High-street, which presented a scene of splendour only inferior to that of Christ-church meadow, turned down into Magdalene-garden, and strolled for an hour or more in the utter solitude of Addison's walk. By this time the full moon was visible above the horizon, yet, between the brilliant red colours that still lingered over the west, and the thick vapours which were ascending from the meadows of Isis of Charwell, her rays were to a considerable extent neutralized and obscured ; so that Reginald could have little chance either of recognizing any one, or of being recognized. And according-

ly he reached, without interruption, the gate of his own college—but there, just in front of the portico, there stood a talking, laughing group, by several of whom he was hailed in the same breath, the moment moonlight or twilight enabled them to distinguish his figure.

Frederick Chisney was not among the first to salute Reginald; but after a few moments had passed in general and noisy conversation, he whispered that he had something to say to him, and drew him aside from the rest. When they had got to a little distance, “Dalton,” said he, “I have been looking for you everywhere this hour past. I have received by this evening’s post some news that must interest you.”

“You speak gravely, Frederick—What is it, I pray you?—You are the bearer of ill news.”

“Nay, that as it may be—but, in one word, the Squire’s dead.”

“Your brother! Alas, Frederick, you shock me indeed!”

“No, no; you’re too hard upon me, after all, Reginald—’tis but our old friend, Squire Dalton.”

“ Dead ! God bless me ! how ? when ? Poor Mrs Elizabeth, what will become of her ? ”

“ Gout, Reginald, gout in the stomach, man— Off like a shot—you’ll scarcely be in time for the funeral, though you start to-morrow morning.”

“ Nay, Chisney, don’t talk so heartlessly. I’m sure he was the kindest, worthiest soul—so kind to both of us, though we were but boys to him.”

“ God rest the worthy old soul !—Would you have all the good old gentlemen live for ever, Reginald ? A pretty world we youngsters should have.—But what’s the use of all this humbug, my dear fellow ? Don’t you see that there’s nothing between your father and Grypherwast now, except Miss Dalton ? and I’m sure her life’s not worth three years’ purchase.”

“ You understand very little of these matters, Chisney ; I believe Miss Dalton may do what she pleases with her estates.”

“ Well, and what will she please ? Hang it, man, you must run down and assist the Vicar in coaxing her.”

“ You don’t know the Vicar, Frederick.”

“ Well, but I know you, I suppose ; and let

me tell you, this is a famous thing for you, my buck. Why, I take it you may raise something decent to-morrow, if you have a mind."

"How? what? I protest I can't understand you."

"Why, Reginald Dalton, do you take me for a goose, an ass, an idiot? Don't I know very well how you have been going your lengths ever since October? and do you think I have not observed some of your down looks of late?—Why, my meaning is plain and simple, man, and you need not affect to mistake me."

"I affect nothing—Speak out at once, and I will answer you."

"Well, then, since you will have the word itself, you've got into debt, Reginald, (who has not for that matter?) and you've been drooping your brows about it of late, as if you could hang yourself.—Now cheer up, my boy, for you may take my word for it, a post-obit is an excellent thing, and you may negotiate one in half a day's time with the hardest Jew in Cheapside."

Reginald paused for a moment, ere he made

any answer. "Chisney," he said, "I can no longer mistake you. You have penetrated my distresses, and you advise me to seek relief in my dishonour."

"Your dishonour, forsooth! Poo, poo! Mr Dalton, you take things a little too seriously, however.—Don't you see that one of two things must happen?—either your papa will come to the estate, and then you will easily afford to pay the sum, or he will be cheated out of it, and then, that is if your bond be tolerably managed, there will be no sum you need pay at all."

"In the first of which cases, I should have been acting the part of a fool—in the second, that of a scoundrel.—Have done, I beseech you—but I do not insult you, by supposing you have been speaking in earnest."

"Well, well, as you like it, Dalton—take your own way—here's my brother's letter, you may read it at your leisure; and here's one to yourself from your father, which travelled under the same frank."

Reginald eagerly took the offered letters, and

moved towards his college-gate—but Chisney stopped him. “Nay,” he said, “if you start in the morning, as I take it you will, we shall not meet again for these six weeks. Good bye to you, my friend ; and mind me, in spite of all that has passed, I must still advise you to look to your hits. Catline’s a cunning fellow, or I’m greatly mistaken in him—once more, I say, mind your hits.”

“I know nothing of Sir Charles Catline,” answered Reginald, impatiently.

“Hark you, my friend,” proceeded Chisney. “Sir Charles Catline has two daughters, and no son. The devil’s in’t if you can’t make the *beaux yeux* to one of them this summer ; and then, by Jupiter, safe’s the word—all will go as smoothly as——”

“Have done, have done, Chisney—you weary, you sicken, you disgust me.”

“There spoke a true swain ! and so you really do in soul and sincerity conceive yourself to be in love ! Why, I protest I gave you credit for more *nous*, my lad. I really never thought you

dreamed of anything more than a little fun *pour passer le tems.*”

“ Once more, Chisney, I pray you cease.—What new stuff is this you are after ?”

“ What new stuff is this *you* are after, if you please, my boy? Come, come, I’m very glad the term’s over—you’ll forget St Clement’s—O, ye gods, what a Vaocluse !—and the charming little German, long before Michaelmas.”

“ I know of no right you have, Frederick Chisney, to make a young lady with whom you have no acquaintance, the subject of your jokes—you have often hinted the same sort of nonsense before. Once for all, I beg this may be the last of it.”

“ Once for all, I beg of you that this may be the last of it ! Why, you look as sulky as a he-bear, merely because an old friend advises you to be on your guard with a little artful outlandish piece of goods, about whom you know no more than the man in the moon.”

“ Miss Hesketh’s uncle is a clergyman, and he is a gentleman of as good blood as either you or I. Miss Hesketh is an innocent and accomplished

young lady. When you talk of me as being in love with her, you know you are drivelling—but I have other things to think of, and once more I entreat you to have done with all this folly.”

These last words were said with an air of sternness which Chisney was altogether unprepared for. He whistled a bar or two of *Jack-a-dandy*, beating the time with his foot—and then saying hastily,—“ Well, well, Reginald, take your own way, *au revoir, mon ami*,”—he turned gaily on his heel, and left our youth to his meditations.

That these were perplexed enough and gloomy in the main, the reader will easily imagine. The death of the good Squire, more especially when he read the letter in which his father communicated it, saddened and afflicted Reginald. The more he reflected on his own situation, the more dark was the colouring his fancy heaped upon all its features ; and when leaning from his window he looked down upon the cloisters and towers of his college, all reposing in the now perfect moonlight, a new sentiment of melancholy began to diffuse itself over his mind. Much reason as he had given

himself to look back with shame upon his own brief academical career, the solemn antique scenery which had at first so much pleased his imagination, still kept all its beauty, and all its majesty, unsullied and undiminished for his eyes. —No portion of the unhappy disgust which HE had earned, adhered to these venerable precincts —he considered himself as one that had sinned against them too, as having taken evil and too effectual pains to neutralize within himself the wholesome feelings and elevating aspirations, which they, and the associations with which they were fraught, might have so naturally kindled, and so powerfully sustained.—“ I shall soon leave this majestic place,” he said to himself—“ and I shall leave it for ever. How can I hope, or dare, or desire to return to it? Alas! the images that should have been to me among the dearest treasures of memory, will lie heavy upon my heart, entwined, inextricably entwined, with the pains of shame, repentance, remorse, misery. One day more, and I shall bid all this beauty a sorrowful—a hopeless farewell! One day more, and Ox-

ford, and all I have seen in Oxford, will be to me a sad remembrance—a sorrowful dream !—Alas ! would, in all things, it might be a dream !”

CHAPTER V.

THE next day was Sunday. Reginald, after the morning service of the chapel, spent a couple of hours in arranging some of his affairs previous to his departure, and in packing his portmanteau ; and then walked down to the river, and procured a little skiff, in which he rowed himself to Godstow-bridge. The day was a fine one, yet it was not until noon that the sun had completely conquered the mists of the valley, and shone out in his full splendour, amidst a breathless and sultry sky of unclouded azure. By that time Reginald had accomplished the better part of his voyage, and he could afford to take the remainder of it as leisurely as the state of the weather required.

A few minutes' walk brought him to the small hamlet of Witham, and he had no difficulty in finding out the house he had come in quest of. It was an humble but very neat cottage, situated about

a stone-cast off the road. Some intervening orchards shut it completely from the view of the village ; but when he had passed these, an open prospect of great magnificence lay before, or rather beneath him—the silver windings of Isis gleaming upon the plain—the dome of Radcliffe, and a few more of the Oxford towers, visible against the horizon towards the right—and in front the wide-stretching masses of the old forest of Woodstock, with here and there a glimpse of some of the green lawns of Blenheim-park. Nearer, or rather, as it seemed, just under the hill on which he was standing, lay the bridge at which he had left his skiff ; and the grey and crumbling remains of the nunnery where Fair Rosamond,

“ *Rosa mundi, non Rosa munda,*”

still sleeps within the same hallowed precincts, from which royal love of old tempted her virgin-steps to stray.

Reginald knocked at the door of the cottage, and it was opened to him by Widow Wilkinson herself, a respectable-looking old matron, who seemed, from the manner in which she an-

swered his inquiries, to entertain a very sincere regard for her priest. She told him that Mr Keith had indeed been very seriously ill, but that now there was nothing to create any immediate alarm, and that he might safely quit his chamber, if he had but strength enough to do so. She said he was at that moment quite alone, having with some difficulty prevailed on his niece to walk out and breathe the fresh air ; and that if the young gentleman would send in his name, perhaps Mr Keith might be all the better for seeing him in his bed-room.

The worthy invalid made no difficulty about admitting his young friend, who was both surprised and grieved beyond measure with the change that so short an illness had been enough to produce in his appearance. The old man was sitting in an easy-chair wrapt in a bed-gown, and supported by pillows. His cheek was pale as ashes—his eye sunk—his hand extenuated and tremulous—his voice sounded feeble and broken. Yet even in this disconsolate condition, he had still kind looks and kind words for Reginald Dalton. His chair was placed so as to give him a full view

of the same beautiful prospect which the youth had been contemplating the moment before ; and he pointed to a seat that stood close beside him, from which Reginald also could see the Nunnery and the river.

His visitor conversed with him for several minutes, and said as much as he could towards effacing the impressions which seemed to have taken possession of his mind. The old man, however, was too calmly persuaded that his constitution was giving way, to be moved by any of those arguments which might have found ready welcome from one that feared to look on the face of Death. He smiled placidly, and said in a whisper, “ You are good and kind, my dear ; but the end is near, and I feel it to be so. When are you to go from Oxford, and how long are you to be absent from it ? ”

“ I am to leave Oxford to-morrow morning,” said our youth ; “ and I fear, my dear sir, that I shall scarcely return to College again.”

“ You look sadly, and you speak sadly, my young friend. Has anything happened to distress you ? ”

“ I have just heard of the death of a very dear old friend,” he answered.

“ Ah ! my dear, you’re young, and you must expect to see your old friends drop away from beside you. You must not suffer yourself to be cast down too much by things that the course of nature renders inevitable. But why speak you of not returning to your College ? I hope this loss is not one that can alter your views in life ?”

“ Oh ! sir,” said Reginald, “ why should I trouble you with my miseries ? I have been foolish and extravagant. My father will have but too much reason to alter his opinion of me ; and I fear I have already done enough to prevent him from sending me hither any more.”

“ Nay, nay, calm yourself, my dear. You have not been here very long yet—you will behave yourself more carefully next winter ; and few cut the sleeve by the arm the first trial they make of it, any more than yourself. Your father will not judge harshly, he will remember his own young days.”

“ Ah ! yes, sir ; but he will have nothing like this to remember.”

“ Maybe not ; but he will have *something* to remember. *Jamais ne fut jeune homme réglé comme un papier de musique.* I pray you, tell him all your story. Don’t think to spare yourself by making half-work.”

Reginald answered nothing, but sat blushing deeply, with his eyes fixed in unconscious steadfastness upon the old man’s countenance. He also for a time was silent, but at length he took hold of Reginald’s hand, and said,—“ I would to God it were in my power to save you from this suffering ! But, my dear young friend, I am not rich, and I must not rob Ellen of the little purse I have been able to make for her.”

Reginald returned the pressure of the old man’s hand, and answered his kind look by one too serious to be called merely kind. “ I pray you, sir,” he said, “ do not thus afflict and distress me.”

“ I beg your pardon,” said the Priest, reading his thoughts in his countenance and in the passion of his tone.—He paused for a moment, and then resumed more lightly,—“ Cheer up, cheer up—for all but death there’s remedy, and you’re

a man, or will soon be one, and the world lies all before you ; and, as they say over the water, *time brings the roses back*. Above all, my young friend, up with your heart ; for if that be once down fairly, where are we ?”

“ I will do the best I can,” faltered out Reginald.

“ Ay, and if you do that, you will do a great deal,” quoth the Priest ; “ for, as I was saying, you’re a man, my dear, and a man may always do very well in the world if he will but set his teeth when the wind blows, and not bleed himself for pimples. Ah ! man, how easy should I have been now, had my little Ellen chanced to be a boy !”

There was something so deeply serious in the tone with which these last words were uttered, that Reginald knew not in what way to answer them. He happened to put his hand into his pocket, and it touched the letter which he had brought for Mr Keith, and which, but for this accident, he might have altogether forgotten to deliver. Glad that he had remembered it, and doubly glad because he hoped it would give a new turn to the old man’s reflections, he now handed

it to him, with many apologies for so long neglecting it.

The Priest took the letter, and said, while looking about for his spectacles,—“ I dare say ’tis something that will easily keep cool.” When, however, he had found his glasses, and examined the address, he said, as if more to himself than to Reginald,—“ Ralph Macdonald ! Well, this is being punctual, however.” So saying, the old gentleman nodded an apology to our youth, and began reading his letter. From the anxious expression of his countenance as he began, the boy could not help thinking that the communication referred to some matter of importance ; and this notion was certainly confirmed by the gloom which visibly gathered upon the old man’s face, as his reading proceeded. When he had come to the end, he folded it up very slowly, and, in spite of the tremulousness of his fingers, very carefully, and then sinking back in his chair, seemed to give himself up for a few seconds to painful and perplexing thoughts. A something between a sigh and a groan escaped from his lips—he started as if recollecting himself, and said,

with a smile—it was indeed a very feeble one—
“ My young friend, you see we can all preach better than we can practise ; you have been doubly the bearer of ill tidings.”

“ No calamity among your family, I hope ?” said the youth, anxiously returning his anxious and melancholy gaze.

“ My dear young friend,” said the Priest, recovering himself, “ you have saddened me with your troubles, and doubly, trebly so, because I can’t lighten them for you. There is no reason why I should give *you* similar pain, and the less, because, God knows, I have a true conviction it would be similarly aggravated.”

“ And yet,” said Reginald, “ if it were possible that I could——”

“ No, no, my dear lad,” said the Priest, “ ’tis a matter that I must find an older hand for.”—He paused, and another faint smile passed over his face ere he proceeded—“ You see, my good young friend, the affair is just this,—Mr Ralph Macdonald, your fellow-traveller, is connected, in some sort—in the same sort of way, I may say—originally, I mean—as myself, with Miss Hesketh,

and I thought, perhaps, he would have given her a home, if it pleased God to take me away. But man proposes, and God disposes ; and, as an old Scotch song says, my man,

‘ To seek hot water beneath cold ice,
I wot ye, it is a great foleye.’ ”

“ My dear sir,” said Reginald, “ I cannot bear to hear you talk thus. You are better, and better you will be.”

“ Well, well, say so, if it please ye, my dear. I would it were so, for my poor lassie’s sake.”

“ Nay, sir,” quoth Reginald, “ you allow yourself to be distressed with ideas that I am sure can have no foundation. Is it possible that any relation of Miss Hesketh’s——”

“ Softly, softly, my dear. You see *chacun le sien, n’est pas trop*. Mr Macdonald is not a drop’s blood to Miss Hesketh ; I must not deceive you as to that matter.”

“ O, I beg your pardon ; I thought you said he was related to Miss Hesketh in the same degree with yourself.”

“ Well, well, my young friend,” said the Priest, after a moment’s pause, “ I see I’ve let out some-

thing that I did not just mean to have told you ; but, in truth, 'tis but a small affair either to keep or to part with. The truth is, Mr Reginald, that Miss Hesketh is nowise related to my family, any more than to Mr Macdonald's. She is an orphan—and a worthy kind soul, a sister of mine, that is now no more, sir, took a fancy to bring her up as her own child ; and since my sister's death, she has lived with me as you have seen us. That's all the story, Mr Dalton ; but I confess I did think that Ralph would have acted rather differently, particularly (for since I *have* mentioned the subject, I may mention that too,) as it was through his means that the acquaintance which led to this connection first began. But this is all nothing to you, my young friend—you have cares of your own, the more's the pity ; but they, I hope, will not last long—*Faute confessée est demi pardonnée*—Remember that wise saying, and make a clean breast of it whenever you get home."

" Indeed I will, indeed I will, sir," said the boy ; and with that he rose, for he feared that he might have already staid longer with the invalid than might have been quite proper. He offered

his hand, and the old man, squeezing it very tenderly, said,—“Nay, if you must go, God bless you ; but I was in hopes you would have staid the day, and helped Ellen to nurse me.”

“Surely, sir, if I could be of the least use,” said Reginald, his face brightening a little.

“Then do, my dear, just lay down your hat again—or, what may perhaps be as well, would you just walk down to the foot of the hill for a little—you’ll fall in with Ellen, I take it, somewhere or other near Rosamond’s Chapel, for that’s always her haunt—and by the time you come back, I shall have rested myself with half an hour’s nap, and Mrs Wilkinson will have her chicken ready.”

Reginald assisted the old man into his bed, and then walked slowly by himself down the hill of Witham. His mind, which had been greatly agitated, in seeing what he had seen, in speaking what he had spoken, and in hearing what he had heard, had now sunk into a sort of melancholy languor, which the breathless stillness of the scene around him perhaps promoted or prolonged. There was not a single breath of wind to touch his cheek—the

sky hung over him with a heavy sultry brightness—the trees stood, not a bough, not a leaf waving, in motionless majesty—a dead and lazy silence pervaded earth and air, and now and then the solitary leap of a fish from the stream was the loudest sound that disturbed the echoes of Godstow.

He found one of the gates unlocked, and stood within the wide circuit of those grey and mouldering walls, that still marks the limits of the old nunnery. The low moss-covered fruit-trees of the monastic orchard, flung soft and deep shadows upon the unshorn turf below; the ivy hung in dark slumbering masses from every ruinous fragment; the little rivulet, which winds through the guarded precincts, shrunk far within its usual bound, trickled audibly from pebble to pebble. Reginald followed its course to the arch-way, beneath which it gushes into the Isis—but there his steps were arrested.—He heard it distinctly—it was but a single verse, and it was sung very lowly—but no voice, save that of Ellen Hesketh, could have poured out those soft and trembling tones.

He listened for a few moments, but the voice was silent. He then advanced again between the thick umbrageous trees, until he had come within sight of the chapel itself, from which, it seemed to him, the sounds had proceeded. Again they were heard—again the same sweet and melancholy strain echoed from within the damp arches, and shook the stillness of the desolate garden. Here, then, she was, and it was to find her he had come thither ; yet now a certain strange mysterious fearfulness crept over all his mind, and he durst not, could not, proceed.

He lay down prostrate among the long grass, which, so deep was the shade above, yet retained the moisture of the last night's dew, and thence, gazing wistfully upon the low door of the dismantled chapel, he drank the sorrowful melody timidly, breathlessly, in pain, and yet in luxury.

Again it was silent—a thousand perplexing agonizing thoughts hovered around and above him—he could not toss them away from him—he could not forget them. They were *there*, and they were stronger than he, and he felt himself to be their slave and their prisoner. But their fet-

ters, though within view, had not yet chained up all his spirit ; the gloom overhung, but had not overwhelmed him ; the pressure had not squeezed him with all its iron strength. No—the sense of misery, the keenest of all, had communicated its feverish and morbid quickness to that which it could not expel—Love, timorous, hopeless love, had caught a sort of infectious energy, and the long suppressed flame glowed with a stern and desperate stedfastness, amidst the darkness which had deepened around its altars. Next moment, however, that energy was half extinguished in dejection ;—the flame still burnt intensely—but lowly as of old.

“ Alas !” he said to himself, “ I shall never hear her again—I am ruined, undone, utterly undone—blasted in the very opening—withered on the threshold ! Humiliation, pain, misery, lie before me, as surely as folly, madness, phrenzy, wickedness, are behind—as surely as shame, burning, intolerable shame, is with me *now*. Yet one feeling at least is pure—*here* I have worshipped innocence in innocence. Alas ! it is *here*—here, above all—that I am to suffer ! Miserable

creature that I am ! She is feeble, yet I have no arm to protect her ; she is friendless, yet the heart that is hers, and hers only, dare not even pour itself at her feet. She is alone in her purity ; I alone in sinful, self-created helplessness ! Love, phrenzy of phrenzies, dream of dreams ! what have I to do with Love ? Why do I haunt her footsteps ? why do I pollute the air she breathes ?—how dare I to mingle the groans of guilty despair with those tender sighs ?—Beautiful, spotless angel !—what have I to do in bringing my remorseful gloom into the home of your virtuous tears, your gentle sorrows !—How shall I dare to watch with you—with *you*—beside the pillow of a good man's sickness ?—Shame ! shame !—let me flee from him, from you—from all but myself and my misery !”

He had started from his wet lair—he stood with a cheek of scarlet, an eye darkly flashing, and a lip of stedfast whiteness, gazing on the ivied ruin, like one who gazes his last. At that moment Ellen's sweet voice once more thrilled upon his ear. It seemed as if the melody was coming nearer—another moment, and she had stepped be-

yond the threshold. She advanced towards a part of the wall which was much decayed, and stood quite near the speechless and motionless youth, looking down upon the calm waters of Isis gliding just below her, and singing all the while the same air he had first heard from her lips.—Alas ! if it sounded sorrowfully *then*, how deep was now the sorrow breathed from that subdued and broken warbling of

“ The Rhine ! the Rhine ! be blessings on the Rhine ! ”

She leaned herself over the low green wall, and Reginald heard a sob struggle against the melody. “ She grieves,” he said to himself—“ she grieves, she weeps ! ” and with that, losing all mastery of himself, he rushed through the thicket.

Ellen, hearing the rustling of leaves, and the tramp of a hasty foot, turned towards the boy, who stopped short upon reaching the open turf. Her first alarm was gone, when she recognized him ; and she said, a faint smile hovering on her lips, “ Mr Dalton, I confess I was half frightened—How and whence have you come ? ” Ere she had finished the sentence, however, her soft

eye had instinctively retreated from the wild and distracted gaze of Reginald—she shrunk a step backward, and re-echoed her own question in a totally different tone—“ Mr Dalton, how are you here?—whence have you come?—You alarm me, Mr Dalton—your looks alarm me. Speak, why do you look so?”

“ Miss Hesketh,” he answered, striving to compose himself, “ there is nothing to alarm you—I have just come from Witham—Mr Keith told me you were here.”

“ You are ill, Mr Dalton—you look exceedingly ill, indeed, sir. You should not have left Oxford to-day.”

“ I *am* to leave Oxford to-morrow—I could not go without saying farewell.”

“ To-morrow!—But why do you look so solemn, Mr Dalton?—You are quitting college for your vacation?”

“ Perhaps for ever, Miss Hesketh—and——”

“ O Mr Dalton, you have seen my uncle—you think he is very badly, I see you do—you think you shall never see him again, I know you think so!”

“ No, ’tis not so ; he has invited me to come back with you *now* ; and besides, Mr Keith will get better—I hope, I trust, I am sure he will.”

“ You would fain deceive me,” said Ellen, “ and ’tis kindly meant.”

“ Nay, indeed, ma’am, I hope Mr Keith has seen the worst of his illness. You did well to bring him to this fine air, this beautiful place.”

“ A beautiful place it is, Mr Dalton.”

“ It is Paradise, but I shall never see it again. I look for the last time upon it—and almost—almost for the last time—upon *you*.”

The young man shook from head to foot as these words were trembling upon his lips. She, too, threw her eyes on the ground, and a deep glow rushed over her face ; but that was chased instantly by a fixed and solemn paleness, and her gaze once more met his.

He advanced close to her, (for hitherto he had not changed his position,) and leaned for a moment over the broken wall. His hasty hand had discomposed some loose stones, and a fragment of considerable size plunged into the dark stream

below. Ellen, thinking the whole was giving way, pulled him quickly backwards from the brink. He lost his balance, and involuntarily, and less by his own act than hers, he was on his knees before her.

“ Rise up, Mr Dalton—I pray you rise.”

“ I ask for nothing, Miss Hesketh, I hope for nothing, I expect nothing. But since I do kneel, I will not rise till I have said it—I love you, Ellen—I have loved you long—I have loved you from the first hour I saw you. I never loved before, and I shall never love another.”

“ Mr Dalton, you are ill—you are sick—you are mad. This is no language for me to hear, nor for you to speak. Rise, rise, I beseech you.”

“ Ellen, you are pale, deadly pale—you tremble—I have hurt you, wretch that I am—I have wounded, pained, offended you.”

“ Pained indeed,” said Ellen, “ but not offended. You have filled me with sorrow, Mr Dalton—I give you *that* and my gratitude. More you do wrong in asking for ; and if it had been otherwise, more I could not have given you.”

The calmness of her voice and her words restored Reginald, in some measure, to his self-possession. He obeyed the last motion of her hand, and sprung at once to his feet. " You called me mad, Miss Hesketh—'twas but for a moment."

Ere he had time to say more, Miss Hesketh moved from the spot ;—and Reginald, after pausing for a single instant, followed, and walked across the monastic garden, close by her side—both of them preserving total silence. A deep flush mantled the young man's countenance all over—but ere they had reached the gate, that had concentrated itself into one small burning spot of scarlet upon either cheek. She, with downcast eyes, and pale as monumental marble, walked steadily and rapidly ; while he, with long and regular strides, seemed to trample, rather than to tread the dry and echoing turf. He halted within the threshold of the ruined archway, and said, in a whisper of convulsive energy, " Halt, madam, one word more ere we part. I cannot go with you to Witham—you must say what you will to Mr Keith. I have acted this day like a scoundrel—a villain—you

called it madness, but I cannot plead that excuse. No, madam, there was the suddenness, the abruptness of phrenzy in the avowal—but the feeling had been nurtured and cherished in calmness, deliberately fostered, presumptuously and sinfully indulged. I had no right to love you ; you behold a miserably weak and unworthy creature, who should not have dared to look on you.—But 'tis done, the wound is *here*, and it never can be healed. I had made myself unhappy, but you have driven me to the desperation of agony.—Farewell, madam, I had nothing to offer you but my love, and you did well to reject the unworthy gift—*my* love ! You may well regard it as an insult. Forget the moment that I never can forget—Blot, blot from memory the hour when your pure ear drank those poisonous sighs ! Do not pity me—I have no right to *love*—and *pity* !—no, no—forget me, I pray you—forget me and my misery.—And now, farewell once more—I am alone in the world.—May God bless you—you deserve to be happy.”

He uttered these words in the same deep whisper by which he had arrested her steps. She

gazed on him while he spake with an anxious eye and a glowing cheek—when he stopped, the crimson fled away all in an instant. Pale as death, she opened her white and trembling lips, but not a word could come. The blood rushed again over cheek, brow, and bosom, and tears, an agony of tears, streamed from her fixed and motionless eyes.

Reginald, clasping his forehead, sobbed out, “Thrice miserable ! wretch ! miserable wretch ! I have tortured an angel !”—He seized her hand, and she sunk upon the grass—he knelt over her, and her tears rained upon his hands. “O God !” he cried, “why have I lived for this hour ? Speak, Ellen—speak, and speak forgiveness.”

“Forgiveness !” she said—“O mock me not, Mr Dalton ! what have I to forgive ?”

“Forgive the words that were wrung from me in bitterness of soul—Forgive me—forgive the passionate, involuntary cries of my mad anguish.”

“Oh, sir, you grieve, you wound me !—you know not how you wound me. I am a poor helpless orphan, and I shall soon have no friend to

lean to.—How can I listen to such words as you have spoken?—I am grateful; believe my tears, I am grateful indeed.”

“Grateful! for the love of mercy, do not speak so—be calm, let me see you calm.”

“How can I be calm? what can I say? Oh, Mr Dalton, it is your wild looks that have tortured me, for I thought I had been calm!—Oh, sir, I pray you, be yourself—do not go from me thus—I am young and friendless, and I know not what I should do or speak.—You, too, are young, and life is before you—and I hope happiness—indeed I hope so.”

“Nay,” said Reginald, solemnly, “not happiness—but I trust calmness to endure my misery. You may, but I cannot forget;” and with this his tears also flowed, for hitherto not one drop had eased his burning eye-lids.

Neither for a few moments said any thing—at last, Ellen rubbed aside her tears with a hot and rapid hand—and “Hear me,” she said, “hear me, Mr Dalton. We are both too young—we are both inexperienced—and we have both our

sorrows, and we should both think of other things. Go, sir, and do your duty in the world ; and if it *will* lighten your heart to know, that you carry with you my warmest wishes for your welfare, do take them with you. Hereafter there may come better days for us both, and then perhaps—but no, no, sir, I know 'tis folly——”

She bowed her head upon her knees—he drew her hand to his lips, and kissed it, and wept upon it, and whispered as none ever whispered twice, and was answered with a silence more eloquent even than all the whispers in the universe.

They sat together, their eyes never meeting, blushing, weeping, one in sorrow and one in joy. Thoughts too beautiful for words, thoughts of gentlest sadness, more precious than bliss, filled them both, and gushed over and mingled in their slow calm tears.

An hour passed away, and there they were still speechless—the tears indeed had ceased to flow, and their cheeks had become as pale as their love was pure—but the fullness of their young hearts was too rich for utterance—and all seemed

so like a dream, that neither had dared, even by a whisper, to hazard the dissolving of the dear melancholy charm.

CHAPTER VI.

“YOUNG man,”—it was so that Mr Keith at length broke the long silence which followed Reginald’s confession of what had occurred—“there is only one thing for which I can commend you. You have been guilty, I fear, of great folly, but you have acted a manly part in this free and undeferred confession.”

Reginald had exhausted all his courage, and answered only by stooping his head upon the board. “Nay, nay,” the old man proceeded, “it is not so that we must end it. Look up, Mr Dalton, and hear me as calmly as I heard you. You have done what cannot be undone. I know Ellen Hesketh, and it must now rest with you whether or not, when I am gone, the world is to be a desert for her. Well do I know her heart—whatever changes, that will not change.”

“I know it will not,” said Reginald, fervently—“I know she will never change.”

“No, sir,” said the Priest; “and therefore I charge you to think seriously of the consequences of this day’s work. Young man, you have done rashly, foolishly, madly, perhaps I might say more; but done it is, and I have no wish to heap useless reproaches upon your head. Nay, do not shrink from *me*; I have one duty, just one, to perform, and I will perform it.”

Reginald rose from his chair, but their eyes continued fixed intensely upon each other. “At least,” said he, “let me hear you say that you forgive me.”

“Alas!” said the old man, extending his hand, “I would to God that were better worth your asking. Take it, young man, however—take it freely, too. It is not in anger, but in sorrow that I am to speak; and you are not to hear what I have to say as if it came from any other than the voice of kindness. But, touch the bell, if you please, for Ellen has a right to hear all this as well as you.”

Reginald opened the door and called to Ellen, who came with slow and hesitating steps. The old man, as soon as she was within the room, half

rose from his chair and extended his arms. She rushed into his embrace, and sobbed upon his bosom. He kissed her brow and calmed her, and made her sit down close to his knee upon his foot-stool. "My dear lassie," he said, "I have heard all, and know all. I fear you have both done wrong, but I'm not going to scold you, my love; and I just sent for you now because I have some quiet words to speak, and I thought it better you should both hear them together. Will you listen to me?"

"O, sir," said Ellen, "you are too good—too kind."

"Nay, nay," my love," he replied, "you know very well that I have no *natural* right to say anything in this matter. You know very well that 'tis only the love I have for you that gives me any title to speak."

"O, sir, you are my only friend," said the girl—"Whom have I ever had besides?—you are my friend, my father."

"My dear bairn," said the old man, "if affection made kindred, we should be near enow, I know that well; but this is no time for speeches,

my poor lassie ; Mr Dalton must leave Oxford to-morrow, and there is no saying, my love—nay, you know 'tis so—there's no saying when we three may all meet again. I have something that must be said, for his sake, and for yours, and for my own ; and you must just bear with me, and let me tell it in my own way."

It was of Reginald's affairs that he first spoke. He repeated and reinforced the advice he had already given to the young man to conceal nothing for one moment longer from his father ; and he told him that he should not insult him by supposing that he would not tell what had happened that day as freely and as fully as anything that had gone before. He told him that he had two duties to perform, one to his father, and one to Miss Hesketh ; but that the first of these was, by every title, that which he must consider, and fulfil the first.—That if he retraced his steps, exerted himself in his studies, and finished his academical career with such honour and distinction as his parts and acquirements placed easily within his reach, there need be no doubt he should be, in the course of a very few years, in a situation of

perfect independence. That until he had put himself, by his own exertions, in such a situation, he certainly could not dream of forming any connection, at least without his father's consent.—That for him, therefore, the course lay clear and plain ; he had nothing to do but to proceed calmly, and with determination, in the line of his duty ; and so doing, he could not fail to be in due time rewarded with the consciousness of having abundantly atoned for all his early errors, and honourably earned the right to judge and act for himself.

The good Priest, having said all this gravely but inspiritingly, began in a softer, and yet a more solemn tone, to touch upon the situation of Ellen Hesketh. The secret of her being in no way his own blood-relation, he had kept from her, he said, until very lately, moved to this reserve both by the consideration of her youth, and of the needless perplexity to which such a communication must give rise in her mind, and even more perhaps by the hope which he had always entertained, of being able, when he should have returned to Britain, to obtain for himself and for

her, an explanation of the real secret of her birth, without which, that which he had it in his power to say, was comparatively of trivial importance either to her or to any one interested in her welfare. "But now," he said, "I feel myself, my dears, (for you are both dear to me, indeed) I feel myself to be declining apace. Had I been cut off earlier by any sudden accident, I had taken care to leave in writing some memoranda of all that I can tell you; but there is no reason, as things stand, that I should satisfy myself with that; nay, I think that you might both very reasonably complain of me if I neglected, for one moment more, putting you both in possession of facts, in which I may almost say you are both alike interested. An accidental slip, Mr Dalton, has already made you, in so far, acquainted with these matters, but you shall now hear the whole story—a sad story it is, my dears, and one that, were there nothing more, may perhaps contain lessons well deserving the consideration of ye both."—

Mr Keith had scarcely opened his story when he was interrupted by Mrs Wilkinson, who en-

tered the parlour to make preparations for dinner. The interruption was, at the moment, little relished either by him or by the young people, yet, in the end, it was perhaps a very fortunate occurrence, for the interval occupied by their simple meal enabled the old man to recover and recruit, in some measure, the strength which the incidents of the morning had so much tended to exhaust ; and after a few glasses of wine had finished the repast, he was able to tell his story both more freely and more distinctly than he should have done, had he been permitted to carry it on unbroken from the commencement.

He now made Ellen bring him his little travelling-desk, and drew from it a packet of considerable size, enclosed first in a blank cover unsealed, and below in one addressed, “ *For Miss Ellen Hesketh ; to be opened after my death.*” He himself broke the seals, and holding the inclosure in his hand, seemed, from time to time, to refer to it for dates and other particulars, as he proceeded—occasionally reading a few sentences entirely from his MS.

“ When the French Revolution began,” said

Mr Keith, "I was resident at Douay, where I had been for several years engaged in the instruction of my young countrymen of the Catholic persuasion, whom the policy of the English legislature at that time condemned to seek their education abroad. We had already begun to find our situation sufficiently uncomfortable, but I believe neither myself nor any of my colleagues had contemplated such scenes of horror as afterwards did occur, when my dear and only sister, Mrs Gordon, suddenly lost her husband in the very prime of his life ; and I conceived it to be a matter of duty for me to leave my charge for a while, and pass over to Scotland, in order that I might do my endeavour to console her affliction, and also offer what assistance I could give in the arrangement of her affairs. Once on British ground, the progressive darkness of all our continental intelligence detained me there ; and in the beginning of the second year, I was living a very quiet life with my sister in St Andrews, to which place she had retired very shortly after Mr Gordon's death. As they had no family, the estate had gone into the hands of a remote heir of entail, and my sister,

scarcely beyond the flower of her youth, found herself a widow, and in circumstances far from affluent. I never had much money, my dears, and I had very little *then* ; however, we had neither of us any habits of great expense, and, by combining our slender stocks, we made shift to live in a style sufficiently decent. The old city of St Andrews was then, and probably is still, a venerable scene of desertion. The Professors of the College, indeed, and a very few respectable families, none of them much richer than ourselves, formed a small, but very agreeable society about us ; but as yet, my sister mingled little even in such quiet and simple parties as the place afforded, and, for the most part, we found our resources in each other, and in books, of which the library of the University, through the liberality of its Professors, furnished abundant supplies.

“ Mr Ralph Macdonald—your fellow-traveller, my young friend—was all that time practising as a writer (or attorney) in St Andrews. He has since gone to Edinburgh, and thriven in the world, but then he was poorly enough off. I had known an uncle of his very intimately some years before ;

and Ralph and I, in the course of the months I had spent in St Andrews, had contrived to become, in some sort, cronies, notwithstanding the different opinions we held upon every thing connected with politics and religion. It was, I think, about the beginning of June I was playing at golf, a game they are very fond of in Scotland, upon the Links, when Mr Macdonald drew me aside from the company I was engaged with, and said he had a very particular favour to solicit of me. You must know, that though my particular friends were of course well acquainted with my history and situation, I did not at that time find it convenient to be universally considered as in Catholic orders, and I wore no clerical dress ; I therefore was a good deal surprised when Mr Macdonald gave me to understand that his business with me had immediate reference to my profession.

“ He told me, sirs, that he had had for several months been acquainted with a very beautiful young Englishwoman, of my religion, who had come to live in St Andrews in the autumn of the preceding year. Her husband had come down with her, and they had lived together in great re-

tirement, he said, for some little time—three or four months I think—but early in that spring he had been called away to England upon necessary business, and left instructions with Macdonald to supply her with money, and overlook her concerns during his absence. That, Macdonald said, had been protracted so much beyond what the young lady expected, that she, being in a very delicate situation, had begun to droop very much in her spirits. In short, he gave me to understand that it had been some run-away marriage, or rather that they had never been married by any clergyman, but only in the Scotch fashion, of a declaration before witnesses—one of whom he himself had been—that the young lady was afflicted with some fears of being altogether deserted by her man—and that it had occurred to him that I might be of great use in comforting and consoling her. I saw very well, from the manner in which he expressed himself—and even if that had been more cunningly guarded, I think I should have gathered from his looks—that there was some mystery, of which Mr Macdonald knew more than he chose to express ; but I considered that perhaps

his professional duty might engage him to this reserve ; and I saw no reason, at any rate, why I should refuse to offer any consolation that might be in my power, to a person in the situation he had described.

“ Macdonald called on me, therefore, the same evening, and carried me to see the stranger. Ellen, my dear girl, you have already guessed the truth—the name was Hesketh. She was very like what you now are yourself, my love ; but her beauty had a shade upon it—a very heavy shade. She was, from her situation, pale and weakly, but sorrow was the sorest of her burdens. I do not believe mortal eye ever rested upon a more affecting picture of dejection ; but listen to me calmly, my darling—her griefs, you know, whatever they might be, have all been long, long over now.

“ I need not tell you, I hope, that after Mr Macdonald had left me alone with Mrs Hesketh, I said all I could to cheer and compose her. She was the gentlest soul in the world, and kindness, to which for some time she had been, I fear, but little accustomed, soothed her very much ; but I soon saw that there was a something which kind-

ness could not reach, and although my sister went with me next day, and continued to visit her constantly from that time forwards, neither I nor she were ever able to draw from the unfortunate lady any exact account either of what had happened between her and her husband ere they parted, or of what she imagined to be the reason of his persisting in leaving her alone. Some things I heard, indeed, which perhaps I should not even now speak of; but, after all, it was rather from putting together involuntary hints, than from any direct statement of hers, that we both became satisfied, first, that Mrs Hesketh had to reproach herself with having quitted the protection of her friends in an improper manner; and, secondly, that she had been induced to pledge herself for keeping silence as to the true character and (such at least was our strong impression) the true name of her lover. I say lover, because, my dears, although a marriage of the kind that had taken place, according to Macdonald's account, be really quite good and legal, according to the Scotch law, yet she had been brought up in principles—no doubt she had for a certain time, in so far, lost sight of

them—that taught her to undervalue, in a certain sense, the merely civil ceremony that had passed ; and, in short—for why should I hesitate to speak it out ?—to consider herself as in reality scarcely entitled to look upon herself as the wife of the man who had abandoned her. This was a notion, my dears, which, in one point of view, it must have been very difficult either for myself or my sister to controvert—but yet we were neither of us so bigotted, as to look on it only in that one light ; and you may be sure we left no argument unused to convince our poor young friend, (for such indeed we both ere long considered her,) that what the law of the country she was living in had pronounced to be a binding marriage, should at least be enough to rid her mind of the severer reflections, from which, it was too plain, she had never been able to preserve herself.—But it was all in vain. Days and weeks passed on—and no word came from Mr Hesketh, at least none that we could hear of ; and at the end of two months or better, we were just as much as ever in the dark as to what was at first mysterious.

“ There is an old Scots saying, and a very

true one it is, that ‘the blade wears the scabbard ;’ and it proved so, my love, with your poor mother. Her mind, pure and good as it was, wanted that consolation which God and Nature have appointed for the help and sustenance of those in her situation ; and Religion itself, my dears, could not supply this want. The more calm her distress became, the more keenly perhaps did it consume ; and we soon found that all our kindest offices were of but little avail to a spirit wounded so deeply as hers had been.

“Mr Macdonald was called from St Andrews upon some affairs of business, and he remained absent for two or three weeks, during which we were the only visitors Mrs Hesketh saw. Now and then we prevailed on her to come and spend the day in our house—but this was comparatively rare, and in common we were the best part of the evening in her lodgings. One afternoon, however, as it happened, she was with us—a beautiful afternoon it was—ay, I shall never forget it—a fine bright evening in the last week of August—we were all sitting together by the open window, looking out upon the sea, and it seemed to us

that Mrs Hesketh herself could not help in some measure enjoying the scene. She had never appeared so placid, so perfectly composed ; I had been reading to them, and she had seemed to listen without distraction. My sister had exerted herself to be gay and cheerful ; and indeed it was just one of those evenings, when it is almost impossible for the heaviest human heart not to shake off something of its load. The servant brought in some letters and a newspaper. My sister and I were reading our letters, and Mrs Hesketh had taken the paper into her hand. After a little time I happened to look towards our friend. Oh ! my dears, what a change from a few moments before ! Never was such a settled cold deadly paleness—such a look of utter hopeless misery. Not a word—not a tear—not the least motion of eye or lip—but the withered stone-like stedfast gaze of utter woe. We threw water on her face—we spoke—we entreated—we prayed—but nothing could bring a single syllable from her lips. I ran out for the doctor, and when I came back, I found that my sister had had her put to bed in her own room. In short, my dear little Ellen was born

within two hours of that time ; and so sickly an infant did it seem, that I was fain to comply with my sister's request, and I baptized you, my love, by your mother's bed-side at the dead of night. She was sensible of what we were doing—we saw that, although she had not spoken a word, and my sister stooped over her, and whispered a question, what name we should give her—for indeed, my dear, we did not even know what her own Christian name was. At the mention of *name*, the poor lady's tears flowed, gushing over her cheek, and it was some time ere my sister had an answer. At last she whispered, ‘ Not my name, my friends—no, no, not mine. Give her a better name ; let her be *Ellen*.’ When she had said so, her tears flowed again ; but while the service was performed, she became perfectly calm and composed. But why should I vex you and myself with all these sad particulars ? There was another service which soon became more necessary than that has proved to have been, and at six in the morning, our little stranger was an orphan in our home.

“ But I must hasten to an end of it, sirs.

When Mr Macdonald came back, you may be sure a great deal passed between us. Mrs Hesketh's repositories had all of course been sealed up; and two or three weeks more elapsed, ere he gave me to understand that he had received authority to open them. From whom that authority came, he would not or durst not say then—nor up to this hour has he betrayed one single iota of his secret.

“ He told us, however, without delay, that the child was entirely entrusted to his keeping; and he dropt a hint, that he was provided with very sufficient means, not only for defraying all immediate expences, but for securing the poor little orphan's independence afterwards. My sister, who had no children, as I have told you, had even by this time taken up a tender attachment to the being whom Providence seemed to have placed, at the very moment of birth, under her protection. I will confess, that I said what I could against the scheme—but perhaps, after all, it was not very strongly said. In a word, Mr Macdonald became bound to pay Mrs Gordon £40 every year, until my darling here should be of age or married,

and then to make over to herself the principal sum of £800. In making this arrangement, Macdonald distinctly informed us, that he was acting by the authority of Ellen's father ; and he all but told us, my love, that the name of Hesketh was an assumed one.—But this was all he would utter. To every question, every argument, every entreaty, he opposed the same determined and resolute silence. There was no authority by which I could compel him to speak ; and as to my dear sister, I believe the truth of the matter was, that, after a few weeks more had passed away, she would have been as unwilling to make further inquiries, as Mr Macdonald could possibly have been to answer them. We perceived plainly enough, that the gentleman, whoever he was, had found means effectually to make Mr Ralph his own man ; and destitute as *we* were even of the proof of Mrs Hesketh's having been married in any form whatever, what could we do in the business ?—We did the best—at least what seemed to us to be the best—we had in our power.”

The good Priest's narrative was interrupted very passionately at this point by Ellen Hesketh.

She flung herself upon his neck, and wept tears of more than gratitude. The kind old man accepted the tribute of her overflowing heart in silence, and kissed off her tears as if he had indeed been her father. After a little pause, however, he raised her from his bosom, and proceeded as calmly as before.

“ The rest of my story,” he said, “ is but little, and it is more for Mr Dalton than my dear Ellen. She was but four years old, when I was called upon to accept of the situation which, till this last year, I have held in Germany. My widowed sister and her charge accompanied me to Fulda. Mrs Gordon died ere Ellen could be fully sensible of that loss—and ever since, with the exception of three years spent in a nunnery among the good sisters of St Anthony’s, my little girl and I have done our best to bear the world in each other’s company.

“ I confess, that, when we had come over the water again, I looked with no little anxiety to a meeting with Ralph Macdonald. Who could tell what might have happened in such an interval? What changes might not have occurred? There

might be a true father, willing to accept, and far better able to perform the duty, which accident had originally thrown upon myself. But I saw Macdonald—you were present, Mr Dalton—no doubt he was willing to have some one there to cut me short in a strain that he could not take pleasure in. In a word, I found that, whatever the original causes of his reserve had been, they still continued in operation. He paid the arrears of several years which were due—but you know yourself, that our private conversation lasted but for a few minutes.

“ Last week, when I first found myself seized with this illness, I made a stronger and more solemn application. Anxiously indeed, but certainly not with any very sanguine hope of success, did I await its answer. You, Mr Dalton, were to-day the bearer of it, and you know the result—My dear girl has guessed it too. Mr Macdonald is inflexible.”

Silence on all sides, and that for a considerable space, followed the close of this narrative—nor was there any need of words to express the feelings with which Ellen, and Reginald too, had fol-

lowed the good Priest to the conclusion. It was he himself who first spoke again; and notwithstanding the fatigue which he had already undergone, he broke the silence in a firmer and loftier tone than they had yet heard from him. "And now, my dear young friends," he said, "you see how all these things stand; you know all that I know—I am persuaded you both feel all that I would have you feel.

"Ere long," he proceeded, "I know and feel that I shall be separated from you. I trust, however, that this is not to be immediately—I hope at least to see you once more together ere I go. But be that as it may, you have my best advice now, and you have my best blessing along with it. You, Reginald Dalton, must face the world, and face it manfully, and no fear but you will soon find the benefit of virtuous exertion. As for you, my dearest Ellen, here, under this very roof, you may, I have no doubt, find a safe shelter—you will not have riches, but at least you have the means of independence—and this letter of itself would be sufficient to insure you that.

"Nay, nay, my darling," said the old man,

“you must not take things thus. Be calm—let us all be calm—we must not make this parting more dismal than it needs to be.”

In vain, however, did Mr Keith endeavour to dispel any part of the cloud that hung and deepened over both. Every slender effort on their side served only to make the pressure, which it could not remove, more heavily and hopelessly felt. The newly risen moon sent but a dim and feeble ray into the chamber, and their sad spirits communed but the more intensely, because eye could not fathom the blank gaze of eye.

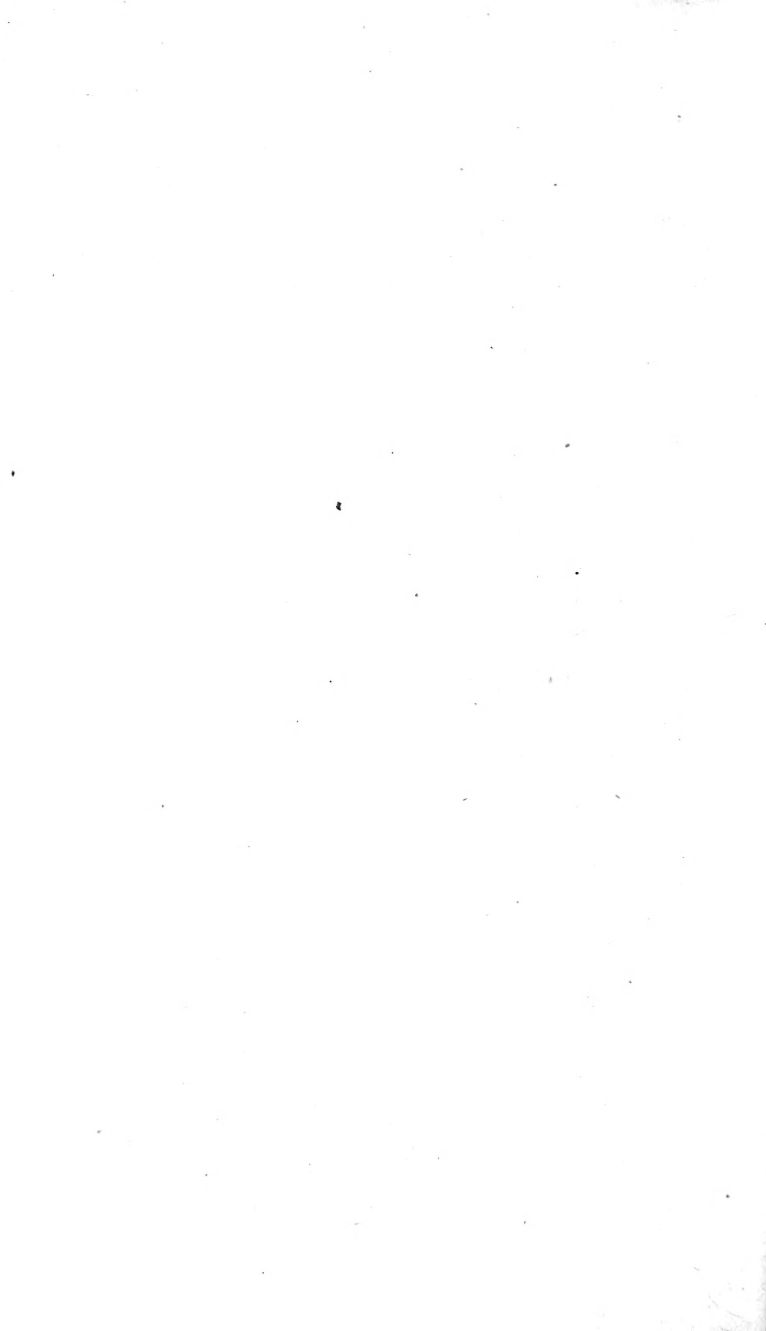
At length the hour came when parting could no longer be deferred. Reginald, when he heard the clock strike nine, rose, and in silence grasped the hands of them both. The Priest returned the pressure with trembling fingers, but fervidly.—Poor Ellen’s hand returned no pressure, but soul spoke to soul in the warm passive thrill that shook beneath his touch. He withdrew his hand, whispering inaudibly. She leapt up, and stood for a moment; but ere he had passed the threshold, which he did with hurried footsteps, she had sunk again, and the old father’s arms had received her.

Reginald, although he knew that he was already far too late, could not pass unvisited the ruins that lay between him and his boat. The gates were by this time all locked, but he leapt the wall, and stood in pride and in sorrow upon the spot where the eye of Love had read Love's silent answer. Calm grief was blended with deep shame ; but now grief and shame did not fill the heart where they had long been seated.—A soft soothing feeling was ineffably mixed with them, even in the darkest places of their dominion. Lofty kindling dreams hovered over that scene ; and Reginald lamented the errors of his boyhood with the noble sorrow of a man. He felt that he had a destiny of trouble to grapple with ; but a ray of light now shone on the coming struggle, and pointed to the issue. A pensive voluptuousness diffused its influence all over his imagination, without depressing its sterner enthusiasm. He kissed the sacred spot—he shed some big tears, drop by drop, upon the turf—and tore himself from the scene.

The moon was riding high in the heaven, and her long line of light trembling on the surface of

the dark deep river, seemed to point the way before his prow. With firm and resolute strength did his oars cleave the waters. Gazing upon the unclouded sky and that glorious planet, he tore his way fiercely, the full current assisting his energy. At length he was within the shadow of buildings—he paused, unconscious of the progress he had been making, and allowed himself to be drifted with the stream until he reached the Bridge of Isis.

He paced for an hour slowly and solemnly beneath the mighty beeches of his College gardens, ere he could bring himself to go to bed. Then, exhausted as he was in mind and in body, sleep came swiftly to his pillow.



BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

REGINALD, in a state of spirits that rendered any kind of exertion more agreeable to him than repose, performed the far greater part of the journey that commenced next morning, without halting. Seated on the top of the mail-coach, which was uniformly crowded without and within, he was, to all intents and purposes, as much alone as if he had been in a desert. Trees and fields, and villages and cities, glided past in succession, without arresting the stream of his thoughts. The sun rose and set upon eyes scarcely conscious of any difference between light and darkness, so completely was he wrapt in meditations, varying

indeed, but not varying in the intensity of their command over him.

His purpose had been to proceed alone to Lannwell, where he did not doubt his father would be ere he could reach it. But as the coach stopped for breakfast very early in the third morning, he was addressed abruptly, while standing near the vehicle upon the street of Lancaster, by a servant in deep mourning, whose face he at once remembered having seen at Grypherwast-hall. The man, though his address was abrupt, had been surveying Reginald for several minutes ere he spoke ; for, to say truth, our young friend's exterior had undergone very considerable changes during the months that had intervened. At last, however, he had satisfied himself that it was no other than Reginald, and having done so, he said at once, without preface,—“ I crave your pardon, Mr Dalton ; but you're not going on with the coach, surely, when your father's at the Hall, and this the very day of my master's funeral ?”

Reginald's answer was as abrupt as the address. “ Not for the world—I had no notion the funeral could have been deferred so long.”

“ Ah ! sir,” said the man, “ then you did not know that Mr Ward had to come all the way from London ?”

“ I knew nothing of the matter,” quoth Reginald. “ I never heard of the gentleman you mention.”

“ Just wait for a moment, Mr Dalton, and I’ll tell him you are here ; and, in the mean time, will you have your luggage taken from the coach ?”

Reginald had scarcely seen his portmanteau unfastened, ere the servant came back and told him that Mr Ward would be very happy to carry him on in his carriage to Grypherwast. “ He,” the man added, “ is just dressing for the funeral, sir, and perhaps you might as well do the same, for we shall have little enough time to spare afterwards.”

Reginald said he would instantly dress himself ; and with that the man took leave of him, observing, that his errand had been to ascertain the exact time at which Mr Ward might be expected, and that he must now ride back to the Hall as quickly as he could.

The melancholy aspect of this servant, and the knowledge that he himself was, in the course of

a few hours, to be present at that sorrowful scene, brought the whole matter more home to his imagination than as yet it had been. While arraying himself in his black clothes, he lost sight, for the first time, of his own more personal griefs—or at least these only served to deepen the seriousness with which a Dalton looked forward to the obsequies of a Dalton. Even the thought that he was so near the half-desired, half-dreaded meeting with his father, made comparatively but a slender impression on him. Or rather, perhaps, the truth might be, that, taken as he had been by surprise, his mind had not leisure to work upon more than what had been so suddenly suggested, and was so immediately to be encountered.

However all this might be, he had scarcely completed his toilet when a waiter knocked at his door, and said that Mr Ward sent his compliments, and was waiting breakfast for him below. He immediately obeyed the summons, and was ushered into Mr Ward's parlour. An old gentleman of mild aspect, but with rather formal manners, advanced to meet him, and bowing low as he presented his hand, said,—“Our forefathers

were better acquainted, Mr Dalton, but our blood will not let us be strangers.”

Reginald answered, very respectfully,—“ I am ashamed to say, sir, that I had not been aware of all my advantages.”

“ Nay,” replied the senior, “ fortune has separated me from my old friends so long, that it is no wonder my young ones should be ignorant of me ; but no matter, that may soon be mended. My name, however, can scarcely be quite new to you.”

“ Indeed, sir,” said Reginald, “ it is not me that you must blame—but it is so.”

“ Well, well,” said Mr Ward, “ we shall have time enough to talk over some very old stories as we go to Grypherwast. In the mean time, let us take our coffee, for I have ordered the carriage.”

During the little time they remained together in the inn, Mr Ward asked a variety of questions, which shewed Reginald that he was in so far acquainted with the state of his family—although he had never seen the Vicar of Lannwell, and had not met the late Squire of Grypherwast for more than forty years past. This puzzled him a good deal; but there was a sort of stiffness about the old

gentleman's appearance, that prevented him from putting questions in return ; and, besides, as we have already seen, Reginald's thoughts were not entirely at his own command. The scantiness of the boy's breakfast was not unnoticed by Mr Ward ; and that, together with the hectic flush on his cheek, seemed to have given him the idea that he was ill. " I am much afraid," he said, " that you have been travelling too rapidly.—Take care of yourself," he added, with a smile. " I promise I shall take it very ill if *you* ever cost me a trip to the north."

Reginald answered to this by a look which shewed that he could not comprehend Mr Ward's meaning. " Ay," proceeded the old gentleman, " I see that you really are quite in the dark, my young friend."

Nothing more was said until they were seated in the carriage ; and even then it was by slow and gradual approaches that Mr Ward reached the story, which, when he did reach it, effectually fixed the attention and the interest of his juvenile hearer. Very shortly, it was this :—

Two English knights, a Dalton and a Ward,

were brothers in arms during the wars of John of Gaunt in Spain. After a battle, which had lasted from sunrise to sunset, the enemy had fled discomfited, and the English and Gascon chivalry remained masters of a dearly-purchased field. Sir Hugh Ward, returning from the pursuit, found his friend and brother bleeding to death beneath a tree. They had time to embrace and to exchange their blessings and their farewells, and Dalton said to Ward,—“ My friend, you will bury me here where I have fallen, but carry my heart with you, if you survive the war, to England, and lay it with your own hands in my father’s tomb.” The weeping knight kissed the crosslet of his sword in token of his promise. The dying soldier raised himself from the ground to receive the pledge, and said, with the last ray of chivalrous affection in his eye,—“ One promise more. If you die an old man at home, let my son repay the debt and bury you.” That, too, was promised, and Dalton sunk and expired upon his friend’s cuirass.

Ward returned in safety to England, and carried Dalton’s heart to St Judiths. When he died,

the son of his friend laid his head in the grave—and so, from that time downwards, it had ever been the custom, that, when Dalton of Gryphewast died, it was Ward of Langthorpe—when Ward it was Dalton—that acted as the chief mourner. The families held estates within a few miles of each other—they had often intermarried—and, during the long series of centuries that had passed, neither had ever been prevailed upon to break this sacred and hereditary compact.—It was by such ties as these, that, in many instances, the noble benevolence of the old English gentry among themselves was sustained and nourished. It was the influence of such remembrances that often tempered the asperities of political conflict, and softened and refined the character even of civil war itself. Thus, for example, the heads of these very races had happened to embrace different sides in the time of Charles I.—they fought against each other at Edgehill—and yet, when Sir Marmaduke Dalton was slain before Newark Castle, Colonel Ward asked and obtained permission to accompany the corpse to Lancashire, and, stern

republican though he was, rendered the last honours to the young cavalier—*more majorum*.

The father of Reginald's companion had been a foolish and speculating man—so much so, that his estate, which came at first into his hands with many burthens upon it, was almost entirely dissipated by the time he died. He neither lived extravagantly, nor encountered electioneering, nor gambled—nor did any thing glaringly ruinous—but, merely from being cursed with the itch of experiment and improvement, he had contrived, in the course of thirty long years, to do what mere indolence and neglect could not, in all probability, have accomplished. His eldest son had the good luck to die before him; so that the family was now represented by a person, whose early destination had been business, and who therefore could sustain himself far better than a mere elder brother could have done under the loss, still certainly most grievous, of so fair and so ancient an inheritance. In a word, Mr George Ward, on his return from India, where he had served for many years as a civilian, found the estate gone beyond redemption; but this had only served

as a new stimulus to his exertions. He had, without even visiting Lancashire, gone back to India—resumed his employment—and laboured even more diligently during his latter years, than he had done during the first vigour of his manhood. But now, at length, he had finally abandoned the east. Though not rich, (for an old Indian,) he had realized a very handsome competence—and being unmarried and alone in the world, he had fixed his residence in London.—Often, during the last two years, had he projected a visit to the north—but feelings of reluctance, such as may easily be imagined, had deferred this from month to month, and from season to season. These, however, had not interfered with what he considered, and well might he do so, as a duty. The late Mr Dalton had occasionally corresponded with him by letter, and had signified, it appeared, his desire, that the loss of Langthorpe should not affect the old relations between the families. The landless man, after the absence of more than half a lifetime, was just about to breathe the air of his native valley, for the purpose of discharging the last rites to one whom he had not seen since his boyhood.

It has already been mentioned, that he was a man of mild but formal aspect. In truth, his life had not been an easy, nor, upon the whole, could it be said to have been a fortunate one ; and perhaps considering that, and the nature of the employments in which he had been chiefly engaged, there might have been no great reason to wonder, even although, with something of the stiffness of office, he had brought back some shade of the severity of disappointment. This, however, was not so. Mr Ward's smile was exceedingly gentle, and every thing about him spoke the well-regulated and placid mind. It has been often remarked, that the life of British India is beyond any other mode of colonial existence, favourable to the manners of British adventurers. This man could not be in any way regarded as an adventurer—but, nevertheless, even on him, and such as him, the habitudes of Asiatic magnificence are apt to stamp their traces—and there was certainly about his demeanour, formal though it seemed on the surface, not a little of that eastern gracefulness, which we must all have admired in so many of those who look back from an English old age,

and from amidst the noise and tumult of a free country, upon years of active manhood spent amongst the silence of slaves, and soothed by all the stately luxuries of rule.

He told the old history of the families—and hinted somewhat of his own less romantic history—in a style of great simplicity—but, somehow or other, although he mentioned nothing but the facts, there was that in his manner that abundantly supplied the place of comment. In short, our young man could not listen to him without perceiving, that, beneath the prudent surface of age and experience, there glowed the suppressed fires of sentiment—and he, in his turn, had *tact* enough to shew his sense of this, as well as his sympathy, by looks rather than by words.

They had been travelling together in this manner for rather more than an hour, when a sudden turn of the road brought them close to a small river, one or two windings of which Reginald had already caught glimpses of from a distance. Mr Ward, at the sight of the water, leaned back in the carriage, and, still, however, keeping his eyes upon the clear and glassy stream, beat the

time of “ Barbara Allen ” slowly and softly upon his road-book. The scenery was getting more and more beautiful every instant—so that it was some time ere our youth had any leisure to notice his fellow-traveller’s behaviour. At length, however, the old man sighed very deeply, and Reginald, turning round with unconscious hastiness, saw enough at one glance to make him aware, that his eyes had better look any other way than towards Mr Ward.

They were driving, as I have said, close by the margin of the river. The opposite bank had been losing more and more the character of roughness as they advanced, and now the limpid stream was flowing on the level of a smooth lawn, which bore every semblance of elaborate culture. Old melancholy oaks stood sprinkled here and there—some of them almost dropping their boughs into the water. Another turn, and a stately old mansion, covered entirely with fruit-trees, appeared within half a stone-cast of the river. The space between the house and the water was occupied by a succession of green turfen terraces. A lady and a gentleman were walking arm in arm on that nearest

the house—close by the river some children were wheeling a garden-chair. Their young voices could be heard distinctly—and Mr Ward's sigh was the echo of a burst of their laughter. Reginald looked once more at the old man—His eye was still fixed—there was a motion upon his pale lip, and the boy needed no road-book to inform him that this was Langthorpe-hall. He also leaned backwards and surveyed the lovely prospect with a kindred sadness.

Mr Ward, who had no notion that Reginald had discovered Langthorpe solely from his own looks, seemed to rouse himself as if by a sudden exertion, just as some intervening trees were about to shut both the river and the old domain from their view. “Yes, my young friend,” he said, “everything you see is unchanged. The turf wears the same green it did when *my* father's children played upon it. These oaks, that had seen hundreds of years then, are not a whit more faded now. These new people have had the good taste to leave even the house and the gardens as they used to be, and yet I know not whether I should

not have been better pleased if they had altered them."

"Nay, sir," said Reginald, "as to that I cannot agree with you. Had they done so, they must have been savages."

"Well, well," said Mr Ward, with a smile, "I believe you are in the right, and I in the wrong. I cannot judge, to say truth, what my feelings should have been, had I seen a fine new house staring down upon a levelled bank and winding gravel walks. Has Grypherwast-hall undergone any of these mutations?"

"I believe," said Reginald, "you will find it very much as it was formerly. I myself never saw it, however, until last autumn."

"Never saw Grypherwast-hall until last autumn!" The old gentleman said these words quickly, and stopped short after he had done so, as if afraid that he had said something improper. But Reginald, who penetrated his thoughts, proceeded,—“And I am sure of one thing, sir,” he said, “and that is, I could not bear to see Grypherwast other than what it is.”

“Very right, very right, indeed,” said Mr

Ward ; “ I hope, when you are the Squire yourself, you won’t change your mind ? ”

“ *I* the Squire !—Nay, Mr Ward, you must know better—you should not say so.”

The old gentleman started at the deep bitterness of the boy’s accent, and for a few miles nothing more was said, either by the one or the other of them. Tall and luxuriant woods edged the road on either hand, and big branches meeting overhead, made their noon-day progress as dark as if the sun had set. They sat together in silence, each, doubtless, devoured with thoughts as gloomy. At once they were beyond the wood and upon the brow of the hill. The village-green lay before them—the cottages—the stream—the gardens—and beyond, among ascending groves, the old tower of Grypherwast. The sky was cloudless—the sun was shining in the full fervour of his summer strength, and all around there was a Sabbath-like silence. The peasants, as they drove rapidly through the hamlet, appeared clustered together in listless groupings, while, from time to time, the church-bell tolled—every note, such were

the intervals, and so profound the stillness, coming upon the ear with increased solemnity.

There was a crowd, but not the least confusion, about the gate of the park. Every body bowed respectfully as they drove past; the curiosity of many glances was no doubt vulgar, but the general expression was an humble, indeed, but nevertheless a steadfast and a noble seriousness of regret. "Alas!" said Reginald to himself, "much as I ought to have felt, how little should I have either felt or understood, had I not come hither!" Meantime, they had reached the door, and the carriage stopped.

They were received in silence. One of the servants, that lined the porch, left his place, and preceded them, without saying a word, into a chamber where Sir Charles Catline was sitting alone. Mr Ward whispered to Reginald on the threshold, "Your father, I suppose?" and without waiting for an answer, went up, and extending his hand, was just saying to Sir Charles, "Mr Dalton, believe me——" when the Vicar of Lannwell himself entered the room from the other side, and Reginald, instantly folded in his em-

brace, had other things to think of than the explanation which ensued. Immediately afterwards, however, he led his father to Mr Ward, and exchanged, himself, a recognition of much courtesy with the Baronet. Scarcely any thing was said—but how various and how powerful were at the moment the feelings of these four !—The Vicar, amidst his, whatever might be their conflict, had eyes, it may be believed, to observe the altered and improved person and carriage of his son—and the circumstances under which he saw the boy were such, that the settled gloom upon his features could excite neither surprise nor suspicion.

After a few minutes had elapsed, Sir Charles Catline, who evidently carried himself as master, asked Mr Ward, if it were not better that the service should be proceeded in without further delay. Being answered by a bow of acquiescence, the Baronet led the way into another apartment, where a numerous company of the neighbouring gentry were already assembled. It was Sir Charles who first entered the crowded circle ; but the moment he had mentioned the name of Mr Ward, it

was upon that stranger among strangers that every eye was fixed. They all knew who he was—and while every one was able to detect in him the features of a race that had passed away, but could not be forgotten, he was anxiously, but in vain, endeavouring to retrace, in grey-headed men, the companions of his boyhood, unseen since then. A painful sort of perplexity was the only result of the eager gaze he threw once and again around the circle—but there was no time for question or answer—the procession was almost instantly in motion, and he found himself walking at the head of it, between Sir Charles Catline and the Vicar.

The distance being so inconsiderable, no use was made either of hearse or carriages. Gentry and tenantry followed the bier on foot. Not a whisper disturbed the silence of the old wood through which they moved.

They reached the open space among the firs—a wide semi-circle was formed upon the turf—the Priest, and a few others, surrounded the new-made grave within the ruined chapel—and the most majestic service of the English ritual was read in

a clear calm voice, beneath the shadow of those gigantic pines. All around was sorrow—but it was the sorrow that attends an *old* man to his grave. Tears might be seen streaming down some aged cheeks—but, on the whole, perhaps, the most painful feelings that prevailed there, were those which the reader may easily imagine to have been excited among such an assemblage, by the circumstances under which the last of the Wards, and the two last of the Daltons, made their appearance. Sir Charles Catline, and the new proprietor of Langthorpe, could they have read human eyes, would probably have kept most of their looks for each other.

The solemn ceremonial being at an end, Mr Ward was soon surrounded with a variety of persons, who could no longer defer the attempt to bring about some recognition on his part of old acquaintance, by convincing him how far it was from being, at least in one sense, true that “the place which had known him knew him no more.” Sir Charles, meanwhile, had turned to Mr Dalton and his son, and was, with an excess of civility

that might almost, all things considered, be taken for ostentatious, reminding them, that it was expected they should stay that night at Grypher-wast-hall !

CHAPTER II.

HAD Mr Dalton consulted his own feelings alone, he certainly would not have consented to remain even that day at the Hall. The presence of Sir Charles, above all under such circumstances, was disagreeable to him ; and, to say nothing of the natural desire he felt to be alone with his son after so long a separation, the bustle of company was little in harmony with the tone which recent incidents had given to his mind. He considered, however, that he was now the nearest male relation Mrs Elizabeth had in the world, and, more particularly, foreseeing as he did, that future visits to Grypherwast must be neither frequent nor easy, he was anxious at once to have an interview with her, and make personal offer of all his services. With this view, he assented to Sir Charles Catline's proposal, and immediately sent a note to the old lady, informing her of his wishes.

Her maid brought, in return, a verbal message, that she should endeavour to see the Vicar in the course of the evening, and that she hoped to see Reginald also ere they took their departure.

The Vicar had already been informed that he had been left one of the Squire's executors, and, as such, he had some necessary business to transact, in company with Catline and two other gentlemen of the neighbourhood. And between this, and other circumstances not worth detailing, it so happened, that the young man and his father had scarcely any opportunity of seeing each other, until they were seated at the dinner-table. A large party, according to the custom of Lancashire on such occasions, surrounded it; and Sir Charles presided over a splendid entertainment, in the midst of many fawning, and some sullen guests.

On Mr Ward, who sat on his right hand, the Baronet lavished at first every species of attention; but, from whatever cause, the old gentleman seemed to receive them with extreme coldness. During dinner, his eyes were continually wandering about the room—perhaps he could not

help recalling scenes of a different sort that his young eyes had witnessed there—perhaps there was a melancholy pleasure in renewing his acquaintance with the apartment itself—perhaps he had recognized some old friends among the portraits with which the walls were crowded. The politeness of Sir Charles prevented him from pressing conversation where silence seemed to be preferred ; but there were bluff talkative squires there, that could understand little of such delicate matters, and who were not so easy to be got rid of. Even young Reginald could not help being pained, when he heard with what well-meant pertinacity these good people were pestering the old gentleman, whose courtesy left him defenceless in their hands—how solemnly they prosed out their dull reminiscences—how broadly, abruptly, and coarsely they questioned—how their curiosity destroyed their kindness—and how the tender mercies of their condolence were cruel.

To say truth, our youth was in a very irritable frame ;—a thousand painful trains of thought were continually crossing each other ;—his own errors—the approaching necessity of confession—what won-

der, if these were doubly wormwood as he met the serious and sad indeed, but gentle and unsuspecting glance of his parent? What wonder, if he was willing to conceal, even from himself, something of this merited bitterness, by wilful and saturnine brooding upon other griefs? What wonder, if it was a sort of relief to him, in casting his eye round the hall of his ancestors, perhaps, as he thought, for the last time, to say to himself, “At least, it is no fault of mine that banishes us *hence?*” When he surveyed the company, all looking, no doubt, very grave and decorous, but all eating and drinking just as lustily as if the Squire had been at the foot of his own table—when he saw Sir Charles Catline bowing in state—ly courtesy, and, he could not help suspecting, in suppressed triumph at its head—and then met the mild and melancholy affection of his father’s eye, or the perhaps deeper, though more restrained sadness of Mr Ward’s, what wonder, if this keen and strong imagination almost exulted in its own writhings! The presence of Mr Ward was indeed a strong additional stimulus to what would, in his absence, have been more than sufficiently

awake. It seemed as if he had been there that day not merely to perform one duty, however rich in associations that duty might be, but to represent, as it were, the whole body of those old recollections that were about to be banished for ever from these venerable scenes. In him Reginald saw not his noble and benevolent ancestry alone, but the type of thoughts, feelings, modes of existence cherished for ages, and on the eve of extirpation—the last relic of days that should no more return—the last Ward at the tomb of the last Dalton. “For us, for him and us,” he said to himself, “what henceforth shall we have to do with these fond memories? We were the children of the soil—what was well here, would be but mockery elsewhere than under the shadow of our forefathers’ trees. Henceforth Ward and Dalton are two empty sounds.”

Mr Ward had spent several hours before dinner in talking with persons well acquainted with the situation and prospects of the Vicar and his family. His eye was incessantly encountering that of our young man; but how much that told,

or how little it needed to tell him, we shall not pretend to guess for the present.

Reginald drank a great deal of wine in the course of that evening, for his body and his mind were alike in a state of fever. That perilous resource, however, had for once no power, except that of adding fuel to fire. Almost in spite of himself his nerves remained untouched, and his brain glowed without being clouded.

At length the party broke up, and just as they were about to leave the dining-room, a messenger from Mrs Elizabeth whispered the Vicar. He was about to go up stairs immediately to her chamber, but Mr Ward stopped him, by saying that he must be gone from Gryphewast without farther delay. Sir Charles Catline expostulated. Mr Dalton did so too, it may be believed, though in a different tone, but it was all alike in vain. The old gentleman was evidently anxious to escape from a place where he could have few pleasing meditations; and the way in which he spoke—or rather the way in which he suppressed his thoughts—was such, that it was impossible to argue with him. They lingered

under the porch for some minutes, until his carriage drove up. Mr Ward then took leave of Sir Charles and the other gentlemen present ; but his parting with the Vicar and Reginald was not the work of a moment.—He drew them aside from all the rest, as if he had had something secret to say ; yet when it came to the point, his habitual reserve seemed to thicken and close about him, so that he could utter nothing but what might have been uttered in the hearing of the whole company—expressions of kind interest in the fortunes of a family, with whose ancestors his own had so many friendly relations—and an invitation to consider his house as head-quarters, whenever one or both of them should be in London. To Reginald, in particular, he repeated this once and again, even after he had got into his chaise.

The youth, when his father had gone into the house for the purpose of visiting Mrs Dalton, was left quite alone—and he felt a strong disinclination to rejoin immediately Sir Charles and his friends. He therefore walked away into the woods by himself. The evening was beautiful in the

extreme. A rich twilight filled the air—and deep silence accorded everywhere with the deepening solemnity of nature. The coolness of the hour, and the darkness of the ancestral groves, soothed and composed his agitated spirits—and a pensive sadness was felt almost as luxury, after the hot and angry irritation to which his bosom had been giving way.

Long did he stroll with languid and slow steps among those venerated bowers, whose shade he thought it most probable he should never again revisit. Long he indulged in the sorrowful delight of gazing from the hill-top over the fair domain fading beneath his view. Long, ere the risen moon warned him that his father might be astonished by his absence, did he pause beside the brook of St Judith's, watching, until his eyes were dim and weary, the sepulchre where it was never to be *his* destiny to sleep. At last he roused himself from the melancholy dream, and began to walk through the pine-grove towards the Hall.

He had passed the gloomy firs, and was advancing along a winding path, bordered on both sides with shrubs and evergreens, when he was sur-

prised by hearing voices near him—gay voices they seemed to be, though little more than whispering—and the next moment a sort of kindly titter came distinctly to him through the leaves. Reginald *instinctively* coughed and trod heavily, that he might not be obliged to play the eaves-dropper—and accordingly he immediately perceived that his motion had excited the notice of these whisperers, whoever they might be. The next moment a turn of the path brought him full upon them, and the moon shewed him quite plainly a young gentleman and a young lady, both in black, the latter seated on a garden bench, and the former standing a step forwards from her on the walk—having evidently, from his attitude, risen the instant before from her side. Reginald half paused—but he felt instantly that that was far worse than going on—and on he went. To turn his eyes right towards them would have been wrong, because implying curiosity—to turn them quite away would have been wrong, because as clearly implying suspicion—and it was impossible to keep a middle course in the matter, without recognizing Miss Catline—whose being at Grypherwast,

by the way, was entirely unknown to him—and Mr Collins, who, he had supposed, was still in the house with Sir Charles and the rest of the company.—[The reader may remember Mr Collins, a young clerical gentleman, mentioned in a preceding part of this history.]—This gentleman answered Reginald's hasty bow with one even hastier—but as for the young lady, she did not shew any symptom of recognition. Mr Collins stammered out something about the weather, to which our young man made a suitable answer, and then walked on, quickening his pace—for indeed he felt almost as much hurt as either of the others could have done.—He saw at once that there was something of a flirtation—he thought, to be sure, that Miss Catline might have done as well to suspend it for that night at least—but still what had he to do with the matter? He was sorry, because he apprehended that his involuntary intrusion might have given pain—but that was the only idea that crossed his mind; for, so far from dreaming of betraying the secret, such as it was, it did not even occur to him, that either of those

concerned could dream of its being possible for him to do so.

Perhaps, for why should the truth be concealed, Reginald derived some little amusement from this little affair, a minute or two after it was over. I believe, if this was wickedness, he was guilty; nay, I even suspect that his offence went further than this. The variety of irritating and painful reflections with which he had been occupied, had probably enough left such a mind in a fit condition for the reception of a certain saturnine species of mirth. Nay, perhaps a little of positive malice might chequer it—perhaps the thought might occur, and, occurring, might minister not unpleasantly to his galled imagination,—“ Sir Charles Catline may perhaps live to rue the day when he first stooped to make religion the cloak of worldly craft. If pride has not altogether been banished from his breast, he will yet repent his skill.”

It is probable that some such reflections had prompted the bitter smile that sat on his lips, as he re-entered the room where Catline and his

party were assembled. They were just sitting down to supper. "My dear Mr Reginald," said the Baronet, "what can have become of you?—but indeed we are deserted on every hand. Mr Dalton has been these two hours with Mrs Elizabeth—and Mr Collins too, I believe, has been about as long with my sister."

"Ay, Sir Charles," observed one of the guests, "it is on such occasions that people feel what, in hours of joy, we are all too apt to lose sight of."

To which the Baronet responded with a very pious sigh—and Reginald Dalton by something that was not unlike a titter, whatever it might be meant for.

The Vicar of Lannwell, meanwhile, was engaged in a conversation with Mrs Elizabeth, that interested and occupied him too much, to admit of his thinking about the supper party below stairs. When he first entered her chamber, he was received with no noisy or vehement lamentations—for sister, indeed, had never loved brother more tenderly—but Mrs Elizabeth had outlived the period of emotion, too violent to be restrained

or concealed ; long experience of life had taught effectually those lessons which it seldom fails to impress on well-constituted spirits ; and besides, nay, perhaps more than all, she had reached an age, at which no such separation can be regarded as likely to be of long endurance. She received him as a priest, and as a kinsman, with dejection willing to be soothed, and with affection clinging the more closely, because so little now remained to divide its embrace. He, in his turn, answered both of these feelings as it became him—he spake as a friend and as a Christian—the religious elevation which he strove to kindle and sustain, beamed visible in his own eyes ; and while thoughts, tender at once and lofty, poured from his lips, the good old lady saw and felt that self and the world had no power to check, at such a moment, the tide of hallowed sentiment within his breast. The soft yet cheering tone of his voice sounded like the richest music to her ear—she listened with eyes mildly glistening—her heart, her deeply wounded heart, experienced that mood, without which the world would be intolerable—that indescribable, ineffable state of mind, wherein human sympathy

and heavenly hope are able, in their combined influence, not merely to assuage, but almost to convert into luxury, the natural sorrows of our frail humanity.

Aware that the more he could divide her interest, the more effectually he should accomplish his good work ; and influenced, no doubt, at the same time, by his own paternal feelings of love and pride, the Vicar began to speak of his restored son—and he spoke of him with a boldness of commendation, to which nothing but a deep and undoubting sense of sympathy could have prompted even him.—From whatever cause, however, this new topic appeared to have any effect rather than that it had been intended to produce. Mrs Elizabeth listened indeed with an expression of maternal interest and satisfaction to the boy's praises—but when the father stopt, he was answered in a strain of energy, such as he could scarcely hear without something like self-reproach. The placid composure of melancholy sat no longer upon her features—the pale cheek of age glowed—and, with sudden and abrupt violence, she at once poured out a stream of emotion, which, con-

trasted with the preceding calmness of her sorrow, agitated and even alarmed him.

“And this noble boy,” she said, without a word of preface—“this dear and noble boy of ours, he and you, John Dalton, are both to be robbed of the rightful inheritance of your fathers—and by whom? By a stranger to our blood, a crafty stranger, a cunning, sneaking hypocrite. Oh sir! when I think of this, it is then indeed that I am unhappy. I am old, and I shall not see it—but the folly of a single girl will be the ruin of our house. I foresee it all—there is now nothing to check their artifice—Sir Charles Catline became master here in the very moment that my dear brother breathed his last.”

“My dear madam,” said the Vicar, “I pray you to be calm.—Even if it be as you apprehend, it is our duty to acquiesce in that over which we have no control. I trust, I and my boy shall be enabled, under whatever circumstances, to conduct ourselves so as to bring no discredit upon our forefathers.”

“It is all over,” she proceeded. “You need not speak to me, John Dalton—I know perfectly

well that it is all over. Catline and his daughter came here, ere my brother was cold upon his pillow—and they have never left Grypherwast since—and they will never leave it again. I know Barbara—I know the weakness of her nature—I know that, ere a few more weeks be gone, they will be able to make her do any thing they please. That girl is as artful as her father—Barbara loves her—she loves her more than all the world besides—she loves her as if she were her own child—and now, she is so nervous, so timid, so unable to be without constant support, that I am sure she will very soon cease to have any will but what this girl and her father choose to suggest.”

“ My dearest Mrs Elizabeth,” said the Vicar, “ will you allow me to speak freely a thought that has been all this day in my mind ?”

“ Speak, cousin ; I have nobody else to listen to ; you and your boy are all that I now have in the world to think of—for as for my poor Barbara, dear as she is to me, how can I think calmly of what she is about to do ?—Speak to me—speak all your mind—we are alone together in the world.”

“ You are not likely to enjoy Grypherwast now—will you quit it at once, and come with me to Lannwell? There, my dear madam, you will at least have the repose of *home*.”

Mrs Elizabeth met the Vicar's filial look with a gaze of surprise and gratitude—a tear started in her eye—but the moment afterwards she wiped it away hurriedly. She extended her hand towards him, and he pressed it with ready warmth. “ No, no,” she said, (her voice trembled at first, but it soon regained strength and composure,)—“ No, no, my dear friend, I feel your affectionate kindness—I feel it indeed—but it cannot be thus.”

“ I am sure, ma'am,” said Mr Dalton, “ your presence would be to us the highest pleasure—but if you have other views, I beg pardon—I shall never say a word more of it.”

“ No, John Dalton,” she replied, “ I beg you will not. But you have a right to hear, and to *you* I will speak. It shall never be said that I left my brother's child unbidden. It is my duty to endure any thing else, provided her kindness to me does not fail. I owe one sacred duty to her—to her father—to our common blood, and I shall not

shrink from it out of any consideration of myself alone."

The Vicar bowed as if to renew his apology—but without apparently observing the motion, Mrs Elizabeth turned round in her chair, and pointed with her finger to the window. The twilight had deepened into night during their conference, and now the moon had risen gloriously, and the oak-trees, and the wide lawn, and the wooded hill, lay full in view—clothed all over as with a garment, in the softness of the light. The old lady gazed for a while in silence—and then, without turning her eyes from the window, she said in a whisper—Mr Dalton, somehow or other, could not help doubting whether she had meant herself to be heard—"No, no, my hour is not come yet—come when it will, it shall find me *here*."

Mrs Elizabeth, after a pause of some moments, rose from her chair, and moved towards the window. The Vicar, almost unconscious of what he was doing, rose too, and placed himself by her side. They both continued for some space looking out in silence upon the beautiful landscape. At length, the lady roused herself suddenly from

her reverie, and said, " I fear you think me a very foolish old soul, John Dalton—but there's no great matter, after all. 'Tis getting late, I believe, and I would fain see Reginald ere we part."

The Vicar went down stairs immediately. He opened the parlour-door, and saw his son sitting in the midst of Sir Charles's company. He retreated without being observed, and sent in a servant to whisper in Reginald's ear, that he wanted to speak with him. He led the young man to Mrs Betty's room—she was still standing on the same spot where he had left her, and it was only their entrance that changed her attitude.

When she turned round, however, to receive the boy, Mr Dalton, even by the indistinct moonlight, could see enough to convince him that she had been shedding tears during his short absence. She tried to master her emotions, whatever they were—but perhaps she had already struggled too much in that way ; at all events, she now succeeded very indifferently in her efforts. She kissed Reginald's cheek, and said very passionately, " God bless my dear boy !"—and then the old lady could no longer contain herself. Her tears burst

freely over her cheek—and she wept aloud. With what terrible effect does not the audible sorrow of old age—above all, of strong and firm old age—pierce the ear of youth ! To what a height has not their emotion gone, ere it overflows in tears ! Their tears are not like those that rise easily within young eyes, and gush softly over unfurrowed cheeks. It is a strong cord that draws up the water from that deep and exhausted well. The pity that listens to such lamentation is mingled with awe—it is heard in silence, because it cannot be interrupted without irreverence. It was so with the Vicar—it was, so still more acutely, with Reginald. His spirit was already an agitated one ; it was and had been torn with a hundred violent and painful feelings, to which the pure bosom of his parent had given no access. With him there needed but one drop more to make the cup run over.

Mr Dalton, observing Reginald's behaviour, motioned to him with his hand. Mrs Elizabeth drew the boy once more towards her—kissed him again and again—and then sobbing out her blessing upon them both, she made a sign that she

would have them withdraw, and sunk into her chair. They both obeyed the motion—the door was closed behind them—Mr Dalton whispered a few hurried words to Reginald, and parted with him at the door of his bed-chamber.

CHAPTER III.

AT a very early hour next morning, the Vicar pulled aside his son's bed-curtain, and wakened him. With a countenance on which serenity was now perfectly restored, and with a calm, even a cheerful voice, he bade him get up, for that the horses would be ready immediately, and that they must needs make some haste, in order to catch the proper hour for crossing the Sands. The boy, who had been roused from the depth of a dark and unhappy dream, saw with a gleam of joy the tender morning light, and the eyes that had never been turned upon him but in kindness. In a moment, other thoughts and real gloom chased away the first eager smile that had sprung to his lips; but he obeyed his father without delay, and in a few minutes they were both ready for their journey. Bishop, and several others of the old servants of the house, were up, despite

the earliness of the hour, and hovered about them with officious hands and humble looks, until they were fairly mounted. Very little was said, and our travellers, both of them, endeavoured to keep emotion out of view; yet, when the wood was just about to receive them, and hide the Hall from their sight, each, at the same instant, turned and stayed his pace for a moment, and the eyes of the father and the son met—involuntarily, and perhaps unconsciously, revealing sympathies that had hitherto been successfully repressed.

This, however, was but the weakness of a moment. The Vicar soon struck his horse with the spur, and Reginald, nothing loath, quickened his pace to keep up with him.

It so happened that two honest Westmoreland farmers, riding in the same direction, ere long overtook and saluted them; and perhaps, in spite of the many things they had to say to each other, neither was sorry that the presence of strangers in so far divided them for a time. The Vicar entered into easy conversation with these horsemen, while Reginald, after a few minutes, scarcely conscious of their being near him,

rode silent by their side, buried in his own meditations.

These travellers reached the Sands along with them, and they all performed the dreary passage in safety. They made a mid-day meal together at the little inn of Ulverstone, and then parted, the farmers proceeding by the coast-road towards Whitehaven, while the Vicar and Reginald began to ascend the hill, beyond which, deeply secluded, lie the Valley and the Lake of Lannwell.

It was a cloudy day, and nothing could be more wild and savage than the mountain scenery through which their path led them, darkened as it was by the scowling heaven. There was no wind to agitate and disperse the clouds, and they gathered every instant into deeper gloominess. At last, just as they were about to reach the highest point of the mountain, the heavy stillness of the air was shaken—thunder growled around them among the black cliffs, and rain fell in such torrents, that they were fain to seek the shelter of a rude shepherd's cot, at this season of the year uninhabited, where they stayed for a couple of hours. They came out cold and wet when the rain was over,

and man and horse were alike eager to hasten the rest of the journey. They advanced rapidly, therefore—so rapidly, that conversation could not be carried on to much advantage. The oppression of the atmosphere had passed away, and Reginald felt the stirring influence of a lively breeze, while the sun, emerging from among the dark clouds, seemed to re-assert himself in splendour, like a restored monarch.

Suddenly they were upon the brink of the descent—the hills opened before them, and far down, gleaming in quiet beauty, lay the silver Mere, amidst all its garniture of woods. The verdure of the valley had been heightened by the rain—every humid hedge-row was exhaling perfume upon the air—the sun, wheeling westward, shone every moment more triumphantly than the last; and the long-looked-for spire of Lannwell was at length distinguished over the groves of Thorwold. The Vicar's countenance lighted up when he discovered it, and he said, pointing eagerly with his finger, "Do you see it, Reginald? My dear boy, I shall soon welcome you once more to our home—our true home."

The boy would fain have been happy, and he smiled as if he had been so. He loved the scene as deeply as ever scene was loved—the wide woods through which his young footsteps had strayed—the breezy upland—the sheltered valley—they were all dear to him. His heart acknowledged its first home. The Vicar saw the smile, but he read not the dark thoughts over which the surface glittered. The youth spake not—he said to himself, “Ay, poor boy, he but feels the more ;” and rode by his side slowly, surveying him and the beautiful landscape with alternate glances, but with the same air of placid satisfaction.

As they passed through the domain of Thorwold, “Mr and Mrs Chisney,” said the Vicar, “are not here at present. Perhaps you will regret this, Reginald, and yet I feel as if for some little time we should be better quite by ourselves. We shall have so much to say and to do. We must read together, my dear Reginald, every day. I shall have so much pleasure in reading with you now, and observing the improvement you have made. If you know more than myself of some things, it will be such a delight for me to

take a lesson from you now and then, in return for those I used to give you ! And the garden—I promise you, you will find something for you to busy yourself with there ; for, to say truth, I have not had the heart to work so much among the flowers this season, when I could not have you to assist me ; but now all will go right—we shall have our plots as trim as ever in a week or two, and then you will have the more leisure for shooting when the autumn comes. Yes, Reginald, we are to be but a few months together, and we must enjoy them. I assure you I mean to go a-fishing with you. I have been forced to catch trouts for myself this summer ; and now that I have taken to my basket again, I shall not quit it because you are come home. We shall be so happy, my dear boy—I shall have such a pleasure in hearing all your Oxford stories—but we shall keep them, I think, until the long evenings come on—at least some of them. Yes, Reginald, it is true we have but three months ; but that is a long time, if we make good use of it.—But here we are, my boy ! I see they have already discovered us ; for there's old Susan staring from the door. I wonder whe-

ther they will know you, you are grown so much taller? I dare say you might almost escape some of your old friends, were it not that your company will tell the secret."

I shall not attempt to describe with what feelings Reginald heard all this. His father stopped only when they were at the door of the vicarage, and the old domestic who had been waiting for them, received him almost as if he had been a son. All the house was a-stir—every face gleamed with delight—every one hastened to offer or perform some little service; and Mr Dalton felt a pleasure which parents know, in seeing himself neglected for the sake of another.

The Vicar found letters on his table, and he retired with them to his chamber, desiring Susan to serve tea in a little while in the library. Reginald went into his own room, changed his dress, and returned into that favourite apartment, but still his father was not there.

The boy sat down for a moment at the open window, and gazed forth idly upon the mere. Suddenly his resolution was taken. He seated himself at his father's desk, and wrote a billet of

not more than half-a-dozen lines, in which he told abruptly, and without circumlocution, his errors—his fears—his shame—his incapacity to bear the weight of that kindness against which he had dared to sin.

Having sealed and addressed the note, he placed it on the table close by the elbow-chair on which his father was accustomed to sit. He then walked hastily down stairs, and away out from the house.

Reginald had formed no resolution of going in any particular direction. The garden was the nearest place, and the shadiest; and ere he had recovered from the first fever and palpitation of his feelings, he found himself at its further extremity, beneath the shadow of a very large and ancient thorn, with branches dipping earthwards at a great distance from its trunk. Perhaps the very oldest impressions subsisting on the tablet of his memory were connected with that very tree. It was below it that his first little mimic erections of turf and moss were raised. It was underneath its green umbrageous canopy that, when a child, he used to sit among some little boys and

girls of the village, singing, while the lake below was crimsoned with sunset, the long-forgotten rhymes and simple tunes of infancy. He sat down with a burning cheek upon the large stone that rested by the trunk. He gazed now on the garden, the flower-beds glowing in the pride of July—the broad walks of green turf—the dial-stone in the midst—all the familiar bowers—and then out upon the unruffled lake, which the last lights of the west were staining with gold and purple, while, overhead, the clouds which the fervour of day had dispersed, were gathering themselves together in widening, deepening, and descending masses.

He sat there motionless, brooding and gazing, until the last gleam of reflected radiance had vanished from the surface of the water, and all above and below was veiled in one settled gloom. The air was perfectly still—the lake an inky mirror. More and more frequently his eye turned towards the vicarage ; yet time passed on, and he neither heard himself called for, nor saw anything like search or motion about the house.

It was now all but night. Reginald, chilled with preserving the same posture so long in the

open air, after a long day's ride, and wearied of expectation, had folded his arms upon his breast, and sunk into utter feebleness of spirit. Suddenly he saw a dark figure moving slowly along the great turf-walk in the middle of the garden. He leaned back, and shrunk more and more into himself—he knew it was his father. He came close to where he was sitting. He saw that he had no suspicion of being observed—he heard him whispering to himself—he saw him advance to the wall which overlooked the lake—he heard a groan from the heart which HE had wounded—he leapt up—the sound reached the Vicar's ear.—“Reginald,” he said, “Is it you, Reginald?—Come hither, and speak to me.”

He obeyed. When he had come within a few paces, the Vicar said, in a low voice, “Reginald, you have not mentioned the amount of the sum—do so.”

The young man, with the abruptness of agony, named a sum, for which, despite his note, the good Vicar had been quite unprepared. He heard him, however, in silence. A long pause ensued. The Vicar turned round, and walked again to—

wards the lake—he returned—he advanced to Reginald.—“ My son,” he said, “ this will make us all poor indeed.”

The boy strove to speak, but the second word stuck in his throat. “ Nay,” resumed the father, “ I do not expect anything more from you at present. I see that you suffer—I know that you have been suffering. I trust your repentance will be lasting, as it is now severe. That which is done, cannot be undone.”

Reginald squeezed his arms together on his bosom. “ I abhor, I loath myself,” he cried. “ Father, I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

“ My poor boy,” said the Vicar, advancing and laying his hand upon his shoulder—“ my poor boy, I have nothing in the world but yourself. You have erred—you have erred sadly, and we must both suffer for what you have done. But this suffering is only in the purse, and if it were not for your own sake, I should scorn it. Know, that if I should be taken suddenly from you, this unhappy fault would leave you all but penniless in the world. Know, that you have undone, in a

few months, all that the exertion of twenty years had been able to do. I say this, because it is fitting that you should at once be aware of the extent of what has been done. I deepen the wound now, that it may heal the more gently."

The Vicar kissed his son's cheek, and drew his arm under his own. "Reginald, my dear boy, you are cold—your hand is cold as ice—you have been sitting here too long in the dark. Come away into the house with me—you need not fear, surely, to face me by the light of our own fire-side?"

Reginald sobbed as he walked along the path with him. "Calm yourself," he said; "I have arranged every thing in my own mind. Patience and future prudence will enable us to get the better of it all. God be thanked, that yours has been the confession of folly rather, all things considered, than of vice. In trusting you too much, I was trusting myself too much; yes, I also confess that I have done wrong."

"It is now," said Reginald, "that you wound me indeed. I pray you, do not speak thus."

His father pressed the boy's arm against his

heart, and answered, halting his pace, "Reginald, for the present, let no more be said between us upon this matter. I shall pay your debts immediately. I bless God that I *can* do so. If ever you repeat such folly, know that I cannot go farther. It is I, not you, that am liable—you will ruin your father."

"I swear," said Reginald——

"No, no," said the Vicar, "I will not hear you."

"I swear," proceeded the boy—"I call Heaven to witness, that henceforth I shall never yield. I will be strong in the strength of grief and shame."

"It is well," said the Vicar; "you are still my boy, my dear boy, my only hope, my own Reginald. Your home-coming has been a bitter one. Alas! my dear, I little knew what made you so cheerless as we came down the hill into our own valley again. But home must still be home to me and to you—you must not hate your home, Reginald—our meeting must not be all darkness."

"Your kindness oppresses my heart."

"Nay, nay, my boy, there must be no *talk* of kindness between *us*. Come away, my dear, the

night is advancing. Go to your room and wash your face, for I know you need it, and then come into the Library, although perhaps I should not call it——”

He ended abruptly—they were close to the house, and entered it together. The moment they were within the threshold, the Vicar called to his servants in a cheerful tone of voice, and bade them serve up supper without delay.

The lights were trimmed, the table-cloth spread, ere Reginald came into the parlour from his bedroom. The greyhaired female servant who was arranging the table, had been in the house ever since he was a child, and now she was using her privilege, and talking gaily and kindly to the Vicar of his son ; while he, on his part, listened with a placid smile to her discourse. This the boy's entrance interrupted ; but when he looked to the old woman and to his father, the calm of kindness met him from the faces of them both. He, in his turn, smiled, but the deep dejection which that smile might conceal from the aged domestic, was visible enough to the Vicar.

“ There's ne'er a drop of wine up stairs,” said

old Susan Hullock ; “and I’m sure you will both need a drop of sommat after such a ride.”

The Vicar paused for a moment, and then said, “ ’Tis very true that you say, Susan, and I hope you will take a good cup to Reginald’s health to-night, ere you go to bed yourself.—Reginald, my dear,” he proceeded, “ take my keys, and go down to the cellar for me, for you must not expect to escape from any of your old offices. Susan will take a light, and shew you what to fetch.”

Trifles make up the genuine language of kindness—and this little mark of confidence was enough to go to Reginald’s heart.—He felt once more the pride of filling a son’s part in a father’s house—but with that pride, ever humble, what deep humility was now mingled ! He felt as if to be a servant in that house, to perform the most menial offices about that good man, would have been enough, and more than enough, to satisfy his heart. But he saw that his father wished him to suppress his emotions, and he endeavoured to give him at least the obedience of concealment. The Vicar himself talked even gaily while they were supping, and encouraged old Susan, who seemed unwilling to

leave the room, even when she had done all she had to do, to put in her little word as often as she had a mind.

Mr Dalton, however, perceived that Reginald could not compose himself for conversation ; so, after the table-cloth had been removed, he said, filling both glasses, “ Here’s good night to you, my boy ; ’tis no wonder you are weary, and in truth, I think my own bones are rather sore, after jolting over that high hill in the storm. The night is calm—I hope we shall have a fine day to-morrow to walk about, and see all our old friends.” So saying, the Vicar nodded affectionately once more, drank off his wine, and rung for his bed-room candle.

Reginald, when he found himself alone in his old chamber, sat down, and mused for a long while over all that had happened since his departure, and since his return. Certainly his bosom had shaken off a terrible load—certainly he felt relieved—yet the pain he had gone through was too recent to admit of his feeling the relief fully. And then when he reflected a little more, a new pain began to mingle in his thoughts. He had

told his extravagance and its consequences, and that fault had been forgiven but too freely—but he had said nothing of his love—how shameful was it to have concealed any thing at such a moment, and from such a father—how doubly shameful to have concealed this, which he had at least *allowed* Mr Keith to suppose he was to reveal immediately. The more he thought of it, however, the more deeply he felt reluctance—“ My father has stretched his kindness,” he said, “ to the utmost point—I have given him pain—I have tortured him. Why should I add to this, by telling what there is no immediate necessity for revealing?—Years must elapse ere I can hope to make Ellen Hesketh my wife—never shall I do so, until I have made myself an independent man—and *then*, what reason can I have for dreaming that my father will disapprove of my choice?—can I doubt that he will rejoice in it?—can I doubt that he will partake in my virtuous pride and my virtuous happiness as a man, who has sympathized so largely with my erring feelings as a boy? No—his joy *then* will be but the greater, because I say nothing of the matter to him *now*. To an-

other person in his situation, her religion indeed might be an obstacle—but not so with him—my own mother was a Catholic as well as my Ellen. In all else there is every thing to praise, and nothing to condemn. Whether we ever discover her family or not, she is a lady, with the education, and the feelings, and the manners of a lady. My father will love Ellen—she will be a daughter to him in his old age.”

In this way Reginald contrived to sooth and flatter himself into something like self-complacence, as to his behaviour in regard to that delicate matter. Having done so, his imagination began, as if weary of long inaction, to exercise itself in all the luxuries of reverie. “When I go back to college,” thus he dreamed, “I shall be exactly in all things the reverse of what they have hitherto known me there—I shall live altogether alone—I shall read without intermission—I shall visit nobody but Mr Keith and Ellen—I shall take my degree with the highest honours—I shall take orders immediately—I shall get a curacy to begin with—if possible, quite near to my father—Perhaps I may succeed in getting one so near this that I may live under

the same roof with him—With him and Ellen together I should be too happy !—What joy will it be for me to lead her through our woods—among them she will not regret the forests of Fulda—her heart will be at home beside our silver lake.”

He had undergone so many different species of excitement, that it was no wonder the stirred mind baffled the wearied body for a long while. In a word, the grey light of the morning found him still lying broad awake upon his pillow. He sprung up when he first observed this—which, to say truth, was not until long after he might have done so—opened the window, and cooled his burning brow in the breezes of the dawn.

Reginald then slept, and slept so soundly, that his father made several attempts, ere he succeeded in wakening him for breakfast. When the boy met the Vicar's eye, he shrunk from it ; for in his later dreams his misery had been present with him in all the depth of its unrevealed state, and for the first moment he could scarcely command himself sufficiently to call up the events of the preceding evening. When his father wakened him the morning before at Grypherwast, trouble

succeeded joy—but now a deep, though indeed a troubled sense of joy shot at once through all his heart.

His father left him, and he drest himself quickly ; yet, in doing so, he had had time enough to become very serious ; and when he entered the parlour, the Vicar took notice of that in silence, while old Susan took notice, not in silence, of the paleness of his complexion. “ But ’tis all the consequences of that Oxford,” said the old body—“ you would have had the same bloom as ever, if you had just staid at Lannwell.”

Both the Vicar’s look and that of Reginald confessed the unconscious truth of Susan’s remark.

CHAPTER IV.

THE month of August was half over ere the Squire of Thorwold and his fair lady returned from London to the north, and Frederick Chisney had lingered so long among the different young friends whom he had promised to visit at their paternal residences in different parts of the country, that he made not his appearance until the eve of the first of September. He arrived in all that flow of spirits which youthful sportsmen generally bring with them to the opening of the shooting season. His cheek had caught a burning glow from the journey which had just been completed, and his eye danced in his head with the glee of expectation.

His brother and Mrs Chisney had scarcely bid the gay youth a gay welcome, ere he said, "Will you forgive me, James; or, rather, will my sister forgive me—do you know I have invited a party of travellers to dine with you to-day?"

“Pooh ! pooh !” said the Squire ; “ you’re not going to make apologies here, Frederick.”

“ Any friends of yours, surely,” said the lady, “ will be welcome to us. But who are they ?”

“ Why,” said Frederick, “ I must own they’re rather a queer set—but perhaps so much the better, they’ll at least pay your good cheer with a laugh. I went round by Kendal,” he proceeded, “ for I abominate those eternal Sands, and, besides, I wanted to be a night at Polgarth ; and as I was riding up the side of Windermere, I overtook my friends, who, you must know, have been making a circuit of the Lake.”—

“ But who are they, Frederick—gentlemen or ladies ?”

“ Both, both—two gentlemen and a lady—a Mr Macdonald from Edinburgh, his wife and his son—that’s the party. You stare.—The fact is, I never saw any of them but the father before. He travelled all the way to Oxford with Reginald Dalton and me last October. He came from Sir Charles Catline’s, so that I suppose he is, so far, *comme il faut* ; but, at all events, he’s an amusing old fellow—a real Scot every inch of him ;

and both Reginald and I got so intimate with him during our journey, that when I found he was coming to look at your mere here, I really could not do less than say you would be happy to see them at the Hall."

"You did quite right," said the Squire.

"Will they stay all night, think ye?" said the lady.

"No, no," said Frederick, "that would rather be too much of a good thing—let them e'en sleep at the inn. But, by the way, had we not better send for Reginald, for he knows as much of old Macdonald as myself? Indeed, I think they took to each other even more heartily."

"We may send," said the Squire, gravely; "but, to tell ye the truth, Frederick, I doubt if Reginald will come. Why, what have ye done with the boy at Oxford? I declare, I never saw such a change on any creature since I was born."

"Nor I, indeed," said Mrs Chisney; "the poor young man seems quite broken-hearted.—What has happened to him, Frederick?"

"I know of nothing that has happened to him much out of the common course of things," an-

swered Frederick. "'Tis a fanciful fellow, though ; there's no saying what he may have taken into his head."

" Ah ! Frederick," quoth the Squire, " I see you could speak if you had a mind ; but no matter, you think 'tis not right to tell tales out of school, I suppose ?"

" Upon my word, brother, I have no tales worth the telling. I take it he's confoundedly glum, and no wonder, because all the country says Miss Dalton will leave Grypherwast to Sir Charles."

" The more's the shame to her if she does," cried the Squire ; " but that's not all, you may rely on it, for the Vicar seems almost as melancholy as his son ; and he at least, I have the best reason to know, never expected anything from that quarter. In fact, he told me so himself, more than a year ago."

" Well, I suppose the case may be, that Reginald has been playing rather too free with the Vicar's purse. I confess I thought, for one, that his prospects were so fair as to the Grypherwast succession, it was no great matter if he spent a few hundreds, more or less."

“ Ah ! Frederick, you’re a thoughtless fellow. I fear you’ve had a hand in leading the poor young man into unsuitable expenses ; and now both he and his worthy father are suffering very severely for it.”

“ God bless me, James ! I was a couple of days at the Hall, along with him and the Vicar ; and, on my soul, the old Squire and his sister treated them in such a style, that I never doubted they were as sure of Grypherwast as you are of Thorwold.”

“ Well, well, Frederick, there’s no mending what’s past, you know ; but I trust you will be very wary as to what’s to come. In fact, I asked them to dinner but the other day, and they would not come, although I learned afterwards that they were quite alone at the vicarage.”

“ Nay, d—n me, this will never do. We must brush them up again. I don’t believe he can owe more than £800 or £1000, after all.”

“ £800, or £1000 ! Why, you shock me, indeed, Frederick. Why, the poor man’s living is not much above £300 a-year.”

“ I’m sorry for it,” said Frederick. “ I sup-

pose he had better not send Reginald back to College again. Better for him to stay and read here, and get a Carlisle ordination, after all, than go back to Oxford, and reduce his style so sadly as this state of affairs would require."

"Frederick," said the Squire, very seriously, "I am exceedingly sorry to hear you speak so lightly of this matter. He's a very fine young man, and I assure you, it will give me great pain if his course of life is to be permanently affected in this way. O, Frederick! it is all your fault. He had no notion of expense—he could have had none when he left Lannwell."

"Not he, i'faith; nor I don't think he had the least notion of money. But, by Jupiter, you must not throw the blame on me; he's a spirited fellow, and got quite mad with wine, and fox-hunting, and cards, and tennis, and billiards, and I know not what. He fell in love, too; perhaps 'tis that, after all, that makes him hang his head."

"Love!—ridiculous!"—said the Squire. "A boy at his age has nothing to do with love."

"Love!—'tis impossible!" said Mrs Chisney.

“What could he get to fall in love with at Oxford?”

“God knows, some little half-German outlandish piece of goods—a pretty thing though, a very pretty little girl. She is niece, or cousin, or something of that sort, to an old Catholic priest there. By the way, I believe it was this very man Macdonald that brought them first together.”

“Well, well,” quoth the Squire, “we’ll send down and invite them, however. Reginald will perhaps come when he knows you are here.”

“Yes, yes; and, do you hear, James, give him a good touch of your Champagne, and I’ll be bound he’ll clear up his brows. I daresay ’tis just that dull, quiet vicarage, that has played the devil with him. It must be a cursed change, to be sure, from old Oxford.”

“Nay,” said the lady, “I don’t think Reginald is out of spirits on that score—I never saw two creatures so fond of each other, as he and his father are—they go a-fishing together almost every day—they are quite like two young companions.”

“’Tis delightful to see how they hang on each other,” says the Squire—“but indeed there can’t

be a kinder, better man than the Vicar, and Reginald has very sweet dispositions, or I am much mistaken in him."

"By my faith," quoth Frederick, "you need not go to praise him to his face in this way, at any rate—I assure you he has conceit enough about him already.—The Oxford ladies thought him so handsome, forsooth, and he had the character of great cleverness, too, in his college, although, God knows, he did not fag much neither."

"Nay, nay," said the Squire, "you must not take to quizzing your friend just now.—At what time may we look for your Scotch importation?"

"Sharp at the hour, you may swear.—I told them when you dine.—Unless, indeed, Mrs Macdonald should fall in love with a poet, or a waterfall, or a petrified piece of fir, or something or other by the way."

"Ah! a blue-stockings?" quoth the Squire.

"Blue as the Empyrean! Poetry, Botany, Mineralogy, Metaphysics! a tin-canister full of dry leaves—a bag rattling with shells and crystals

—Dugald Stewart in the chaise-pocket — and Wordsworth, the Laker, in her reticule !”

“ O Lord !” said Mrs Chisney, “ what shall I get to say to such a learned lady ?”

“ Leave her to me,” cried Frederick. “ I’ll undertake to amuse her ; and, if you will give me my own way, to amuse you all.”

“ Have a care,” said the Squire—“ remember, at all events, they’re our guests.”

“ Never fear, never fear—but be sure you have a pretty lot of books tumbled about the drawing-room—bring down Locke, and Hartley, and Denon’s Egypt, and Thomson’s Seasons, and the Edinburgh Review, if you still take it in, and you shall see what you shall see.”

The notion which Mr and Mrs Chisney had taken up about Reginald’s state of spirits, was, in reality, by no means an erroneous one. Although his first feelings had been those of relief, yet, when he had had time to reflect more at leisure upon all that had happened, the weight had sunk down again upon his bosom. In spite of the silence which the kind Vicar maintained, in regard to the disagreeable subject of their first conversation, and

in spite of all the efforts which the good man made to appear as happy as usual, Reginald's filial eyes could not be mistaken ; he saw clearly that the Vicar was struggling with melancholy thoughts ; and his conscience told him, that he, he only, was the cause. But then what could the young man do ? Was it for him to lead the conversation to the painful theme, and thereby, perhaps, aggravate his father's pain, but certainly not diminish it ?

Delicacy on both sides prevented, in a word, free communication of feelings as to this matter—but perhaps the same delicacy enabled each to divine all that the other could have said, had he spoken. At all events, there was nothing, not the least touch, of coldness or distrust. They spent their days together—they wandered together over the woods and hills—they lingered out the burning noons together beside the brooks ; and at evening they read together, as the Vicar had fondly proposed at their first meeting. And it was then, perhaps, that they both approached the nearest to happiness ; for the thoughts of others were able to draw them from their own ;

and besides, the Vicar could not read along with his son, without perceiving that, of whatever follies he had been guilty, his mind, his whole intellect, had made a rapid stride during the period of his absence. It was not merely that he knew more Greek and Latin than he did before, (although this was true also,) but that his mind had been forced upon itself, and that he followed no longer like a boy, but understood like a man. The experiences of life, the joys of revelry, the trouble of contrition, the bitters, above all, and the sweets of love—these were not things that had passed over him without leaving their traces. They had ploughed up the smooth surface, and revealed poverty indeed, of which he was, but riches also, of which he was not, conscious.—His spirit had leaped over that gulf, which some never pass at all, and which so many pass with slow and cautious difficulty.—He had a present, from which he could borrow light to look upon the past. Poetry was no longer a web of dreams, nor history a roll of names ;—wherever strength was visible, he strove to read its workings ; he sought for motives beneath the glaring surface of action—and

every page, on which vivid intellect had stamped its image, no matter what the style or the theme, transferred, with the rapidity and the brightness of lightning, a new energy, impulse, and stimulus to his understanding.

Upon the whole, there can be no doubt that he was soothed and comforted by being with his father. He was in aspect, indeed, dejected—and there was heaviness at the heart, to which that was the index—but there was nothing now, or comparatively very little, of that hot, and feverish, and passionate pain, which had accompanied him from Oxford to his paternal fire-side. The very calmness of the scene—the regularity of hours and occupations—the total abstinence from wine, noisy company, and strong excitations of any other than an intellectual kind—and, above all, the soft, and amiable, and consciously pure and good feelings, which every thing in his intercourse with the Vicar tended to promote and nourish—all these things operated quietly and gently upon his heart, and the sadness which they could not expel, they at least robbed of its keenest bitterness.

He had had the satisfaction, moreover, of receiving a very long, and kind, and paternal letter from old Mr Keith, in which the worthy Priest informed him, that his health had been quite beyond his hopes re-established. But this, much as it rejoiced him, was not all that was pleasing to him in the Priest's letter. Mr Keith told him distinctly, that, at the time when he came to Godstow, he feared he himself had been guilty of almost as culpable rashness as either of the young people—that he now looked back with great regret to the easiness with which, in a very weak state of body, and perhaps of mind, he had sanctioned, (or at least done what might be so interpreted,) an engagement of so much solemnity between two persons so young and so inexperienced. “I ask nothing of you now,” said he, “but silence. If you have not mentioned this business to your father, do not say a word of it. Banish it, at least do what you can to banish it, from your own thoughts. It shall be my business to divert, as far as I can, the mind of my ward from dwelling upon the remembrance of what has been. Should you both find hereafter that your feelings

have undergone no change, you shall have my blessing on your union ; but, looking at the whole affair as I now can do—looking both to her interests, and, what are scarcely less dear to me, to yours, I cannot but see that there would be folly, and worse than folly, in my giving my sanction to any correspondence by letter between you, under present circumstances.”

Reginald felt, indeed, what every young lover feels, that it was a sad thing for him to be forbidden the privilege of writing and receiving letters from his fair one ; but the Priest's injunction of silence towards his father, was to him, who really had not had courage to speak, and yet had felt as if silence were guilt, instant and effectual relief from an intolerable pain. “ It is but for a very few weeks more,” said he to himself, “ and I shall see Ellen again—I feel that we shall meet unchanged.” If this last feeling was sometimes crost by a passing shade of doubt, it still kept its place.

As it happened, the Vicar and he were in the library together when Mr Chisney's invitation arrived. They had just been reading something

that had exceedingly delighted the Vicar. "Well, Reginald," said he, "I think we may as well dine with the Squire to-day—read his note."

Had the Vicar been able to read Reginald's face, (which he could not do, for the youth had his back towards the window,) he must have seen enough to excite his attention. Reginald started, and his cheek crimsoned, when he saw the name of Macdonald—the name of that individual with whom the fate of Ellen Hesketh seemed, in some mysterious fashion, to have been so closely and so inextricably connected. All this, however, was lost upon the Vicar; he heard only the young man's hurried whisper of assent, and by the time he had penned his answer to the Squire, he was alone in the apartment.

To say truth, Reginald, the moment after he had left the Vicar's room, was half inclined to repent him of the consent which he had given. He could not help blaming Frederick Chisney very much for all the unhappy consequences which his residence at Oxford had entailed upon him. There was no one thing that he could lay his

finger on, and say, *here* Chisney did the evil—but he felt, and, in regard to some things, feeling is not the worst guide, that but for that gay and sportive, and, at the same time, strong and sarcastic spirit, his career might have, in all probability, been blameless, and his heart at this moment light. He therefore dreaded, in some sort, the being thrown again into his society. As for Macdonald, a minute's reflection told him, that he had not only no reason, but no right, to expect any thing either good or bad from meeting with him—and yet, in spite of all this, a certain vague indescribable feeling haunted him, that some day or other he might have more to do with this man; and that, therefore, he might do well to keep up his acquaintance with him, such as it was.

The Scotch party were already at Thorwold, ere the Vicar and his son arrived there; and there were, as it happened, several strangers besides. The Daltons had not been prepared for Macdonald's family, nor for any thing like the bustle of company—but perhaps, after all, Reginald was not sorry that his meeting, either with Macdonald

or with Frederick Chisney, should be other than a private one. The Scot, when he entered the room, advanced to him, and said, in his highest note, shaking his hand, as if he would have pulled it out of the socket, "As I'm a Christian soul, I would have passed him in the street—why, he's grown sax inches in less than the twelvemonth—Od ! he's taller than our Thomas, I believe.—How are you, Mr Dalton ? but I need not ask that—it's weel seen on you that there's rowth of good cheer among yon Principals and Doctors—Od ! man, do ye mind yon waiter ? ha, ha, ha !"

The Vicar was standing close beside Reginald, so that he could not but introduce Mr Macdonald—who, in his turn, led them both to the sofa where Mrs Chisney was sitting, and introduced them to a lady, whom, unless he had said the word, Reginald would certainly not have suspected of being his wife. There might perhaps be something of the *precieuse* in her air ; but, on the whole, and more especially at the first glance, Mrs Macdonald was not only a very handsome, but a ladylike person. Young she could not

be—her son, a full-grown man, exceedingly like her in feature and complexion, stood by her elbow—but her eye had lost neither the fire nor the richness of youth ; and her hair, where the curls peeped from beneath her mob-cap, shewed all the dark and firm glossiness of five-and-twenty. She disdained not to smile very sweetly when our youth was presented to her ; nor did her smile disdain to display a set of teeth, such as (if French critics may be in aught believed) but few English-women are fortunate enough to exhibit at any period of life.

This lady was seated at the dinner-table between Reginald and Frederick, while right opposite were the Vicar and Mr Macdonald. More than once our youth felt disposed to bestow an execration upon this arrangement—but the reader shall judge.

MACDONALD.

Mr Reginald Dalton, I say, will you do me the pleasure to take a glass of sherry with me ?—Here's to you, my young friend—and how did

you leave all at Oxford? Did you ever foregather with the auld Priest any more?

REGINALD (*colouring.*)

I saw Mr Keith just before I left the University, sir. He was in a very bad state of health, I am sorry to say.

MACDONALD.

So I hear—so I hear—Poor man, he's seen his best, that must be allowed.—What is't ails him?

REGINALD.

I feared a general breaking up—but I understand he is rather better again.

MACDONALD.

I'm glad of that—I'm heartily glad of that, sir.—(*Turning to the VICAR.*) 'Tis an old acquaintance of mine, sir; a Catholic clergyman, now resident at Oxford. I had the pleasure of introducing your son to him last harvest.

MRS MACDONALD (*to REGINALD.*)

Pray, Mr Dalton, did you ever meet with a young lady that lives with Mr Keith—his niece—Miss Hesketh? Mr Macdonald did not see her, somehow, when he was at Oxford.

MACDONALD.

And how could I see her, Mrs Macdonald ? It was ten o'clock ere I got to the town, and I was to be off for London again before breakfast. I'm sure I told you Mr Keith said she was very well.

REGINALD (*to* MRS MACDONALD.)

I have seen Miss Hesketh, ma'am—I believe she is very well.

FREDERICK CHISNEY.

I believe she is—a very pretty girl indeed, Mrs Macdonald.—Isn't she so, Dalton ?

REGINALD.

Yes—certainly—very much so.

MRS MACDONALD.

If she's like her mother, I'm sure——

MR MACDONALD (*to the* VICAR—*speaking very loud.*)

It's a very fine town, Oxford—nobody can deny that—I have seldom seen a prettier little town—but, dear me ! what a Babel of Colleges and Churches ! What is the use of them a', Mr Dalton ? A terrible waste of money yonder, sir.

THE VICAR.

Why, young men will be young men, Mr Macdonald.

MACDONALD.

My troth will they—but it was not that I was thinking of—I was speaking of the great expenditure of public property, sir. There's no man will tell me that things are as they should be in yon quarter.

THE VICAR.

Why, Mr Macdonald, I believe these colleges have just as good a right to their lands as any private gentleman has to his—generally a more ancient one indeed.

MACDONALD.

Pooh, pooh ! every thing that serves for public purposes is public property, and ought to be under the control of the public.—I will venture to say, that there's more young men educated at Edinburgh, than at either Oxford or Cambridge ; and with us, I suppose a thousand a-year or so is all it costs any body, but the individual students their fees, and so forth. But, to be sure, every thing goes on in a quieter way with us. Our pro-

fessors, sir, must starve, if they be idle, and our lads must behave themselves. Oh, what a night was that I past at Oxford !

THE VICAR.

What happened, sir ?

MACDONALD.

What happened, sir ?—Why, it is not in the power of any Christian man to tell ye what happened—Such a hubbleshew, such a racketing, such fighting, such knocking down, such a rushing and riving. Why, they were worse than any meal-mob—and some auld heads among the very thick o't too.

FREDERICK CHISNEY.

Not yours, I hope, Mr Macdonald ?

MACDONALD.

No, my faith, I keepit a good loup of twa stories of stone and lime between me and them ; but I dare say you were ane of them yourself, Mr Chisney—you're no better than your neighbours, I'se warrant.—I'm sure *you* would get little sleep any more than me, Mr Reginald.

THE SQUIRE.

Come, come, we'll have no tales out of school,

Mr Macdonald.—I am sure you enjoyed the ride through Little Furness, ma'am.

MRS MACDONALD.

Delightful indeed, sir—such charming woods—such picturesque old oaks—and such lakes—such heavenly lakes !—but Mr Macdonald would scarcely give us time to look at that grand Abbey. Was it not very hard, Mr Chisney ?

MACDONALD.

Well, my dear, and if you had had your will of the Abbey, you must have wanted Mr Chisney's good dinner, you'll allow.—Ha ! ha !—I think I have her there, Mr Chisney.

MRS MACDONALD.

O, Mr Macdonald, you make me blush for you, indeed.

MACDONALD.

Blush away, my love ; and, I think, Mr Reginald Dalton is blushing too. I suppose you're a lover of scenery, too, wi' your tale.

REGINALD.

I must plead guilty, Mr Macdonald.

FREDERICK CHISNEY.

We have some fine ruins near Oxford. I think

you were fond of Godstow, Reginald. You went up the river, they told me, the very day ere you set off.

MRS MACDONALD.

Godstow ! how I should like to see Godstow ! Do they show the very spot where fair Rosamond lies, Mr Dalton ?

REGINALD.

Indeed, I don't know, ma'am, but 'tis supposed to be somewhere within the chapel.

FREDERICK.

Pooh ! You know Conybeare found out the very place. I was present myself when they dug it open ; and, for that matter, I abstracted a tooth or two, which are heartily at Mrs Macdonald's service, if she will do me the honour.

MRS MACDONALD.

Oh, what sacrilege ! You shock me, Mr Chisney. Well, how barbarous men are ! I protest, none of you have any feeling.—Is Godstow really a pretty ruin, though, Mr Reginald ?

REGINALD.

O, very pretty indeed—a very pretty ruin.

Every one allows the situation of the nunnery is charming.

MRS MACDONALD.

By the way, Mr Reginald, talking of nunneries, is it true that Miss Hesketh took the veil, ere she left Germany? It was said so at one time.

MACDONALD.

My dear, what folly you speak of. How should Mr Dalton know anything about Miss Hesketh and her veil? I daresay he never saw her three times in his life.

FREDERICK.

Not he, indeed.—Did you, Reginald?

MRS MACDONALD.

And she's really very handsome, Mr Dalton? Dark or fair? Her mother was very dark.

MACDONALD.

My dear Mrs Macdonald, I'm sure you must see well enough that Mr Dalton has never paid any very particular attention to the young lady's complexion. Don't you know that the young gentlemen at Oxford live like so many monks in their colleges?

FREDERICK.

Yes, like monks exactly. We wear long black gowns, ma'am, and attend matins and vespers, and say a Latin grace before dinner, and are shut up every night at nine o'clock, under lock and key ; and there's never a petticoat allowed to be seen among our quadrangles. We are a most monastic fraternity, you may depend upon it.

MRS MACDONALD.

Interesting relics of antiquity ! Rather Gothic, however, Mr Chisney.

MACDONALD.

Interesting fiddlesticks !—Why, they're the most outrageous set of drinking, roaring, rioting, young scapegraces under the sun. It's no the cowl makes the monk, my dear.

MRS CHISNEY.

You have another delightful journey before you, Mrs Macdonald. They say—for indeed I am ashamed to confess I have never been there myself—that the views about Coniston Mere are some of the finest in the whole of the lake country.

MRS MACDONALD.

Coniston ! I don't remember the name in Wordsworth.

MR CHISNEY.

Why, I don't think Coniston is worth going so far out of your way for, unless, indeed, you were to cross the Sands at Ulverstone, and so to Lancaster.

MACDONALD.

Well, that's just the route I was purposing. When we're at Lancaster, we're not far from Little Pyesworth ;—and, if I understood Sir Charles right, this Grypherwast is not very far from that.

MR CHISNEY.

Grypherwast !—You are going to Grypherwast-hall, Mr Macdonald ? You will see some friends of Mr Dalton's, then.

MACDONALD (*to the VICAR.*)

O, you're the same Daltons, are you, Mr Dalton ?

THE VICAR.

The same family, Mr Macdonald.

MR CHISNEY.

Mr Dalton is the nearest branch of the family, Mr Macdonald.

MACDONALD.

I crave your pardon ; but really I'm not acquainted with any of the Grypherwast family, properly speaking. 'Tis Sir Charles Catline I'm going to pay a little visit to—he and I are old friends—of twenty years standing, I believe.

MR CHISNEY.

Sir Charles is now residing at Grypherwast ?

MR MACDONALD.

So I took him up. I wrote, offering the visit, and the answer was dated there.

MR CHISNEY.

A very fine old seat you will see, Mr Macdonald ; 'tis really one of the best specimens we have, in this part of the world, of your real old English manor-place.

MRS MACDONALD.

Is there any painted glass, Mr Reginald ? For, of course, you are well acquainted with this place.

REGINALD.

A little in the hall, ma'am ; but I really never examined the whole of the house.

MACDONALD.

O, my dear, you'll have abundance of time to look about for yourself. And my friend Lady Catline has a great deal of taste; she'll have a pleasure in shewing you all the lions.

MRS MACDONALD (*to her son.*)

Well, Tom, my dear, I'm so happy to hear 'tis a real old hall we're to see. I love the very name of an old hall.

MACDONALD.

My dear Mrs Macdonald, you think every body is as much taken up about old halls, and old hills, and old windows, and old what-not's, as yourself? I daresay Tom will have other things to look to in a house where there are so many pretty young ladies. I assure you, one may go far ere one meets with a more charming family than the Catlines, &c. &c. &c.

CHAPTER V.

THE meeting with Frederick Chisney and the Macdonalds was the only incident that broke, during several weeks, the uniformity of Reginald's life. The Scotch party proceeded the next day on their journey towards Grypherwast ; and Mr Frederick and our youth met but rarely afterwards. The truth was, that Reginald had refused, even although the Vicar himself pressed it, to buy a shooting licence ; and Chisney, who had never dreamt of that impediment, attributed Reginald's refusal to accompany him to the fields, to some whim of coldness, with which he was too careless and too proud to think of contending. The consequence was, that the two young men saw little of each other, except when now and then they met at the dinner-table of Thorwold. The Hall was full of company indeed for the most

part of this month—and Frederick was necessarily engaged very much with his own and his brother's friends.

It might perhaps be rather more than a fortnight from the time when the Macdonalds left Thorwold, ere the Vicar of Lannwell received a summons to go to Grypherwast, for the dispatch of some business connected with the late Mr Dalton's executry. The summons came in the shape of a formal letter from an attorney, so that the Vicar never thought of carrying his son along with him. He was absent for several days—and when he came back, he said very little to Reginald about any thing that had happened. From a few broken hints, the young man gathered that Mr Macdonald had been mistaken in supposing, that Sir Charles Catline had taken up his residence, with all his family, at Grypherwast-hall ; but that the elder Miss Catline was still there, and indeed had never left the place since the time of the Squire's death. Mrs Elizabeth, he was led to understand, had recovered, in a great measure, her usual composure of spirits—and, in short, his impression was, that, while Sir Charles managed

all his sister's affairs, the internal economy of the house itself continued to be very much what it had been during Mr Dalton's lifetime. Of all these things, however, the Vicar spoke briefly and reservedly—still more obscurely he touched upon the fact, that he had been farther in Lancashire than Grypherwast-hall; but there was something in his look when he did mention that, which made Reginald suspect, that the business which called him to extend his journey, had been disagreeable. In a word, Reginald gathered from that, and from a more frequent receipt of letters, and other little circumstances, that the Vicar was engaged in getting together the money necessary for discharging his debts—and that this was a matter of some difficulty. The sense of this, which every succeeding day rendered stronger, afflicted the young man very heavily—and so much the more surely, by reason of the extreme delicacy marked in the Vicar's guarded reserve about every thing connected with that painful subject.

One evening the Vicar said abruptly to Reginald, "My dear boy, I have been thinking a great deal about you. It occurs to me, that, upon

the whole, it might be as well if you should spend this winter at home, and not return to the University until the next Michaelmas. I can write to Mr Barton, who will do whatever is necessary in the way of business, and explain to the head of your College, that some family circumstances have induced me to think this step an advisable one."

Reginald assented at once to his father's proposal ; and after he had done so, there was some cheerful, even gay, conversation between them, about what their occupations during the solitary and dark season of the year should be. It ended in the Vicar's ringing for lights, and opening his desk—" For there's no use in losing even a single post," said he ; " I had much better write immediately to Mr Barton."

Reginald left him, and walked out into the garden by himself. As he strolled up and down in the twilight among the fading bowers, he had leisure to consider more narrowly the plan to which he had just acceded—or rather the true state of his own feelings in regard to it. In truth,

he had been taken quite by surprise—the idea of remaining all the winter at Lannwell had never once occurred to him—at least it had never seriously occurred to him, since the evening of his return to the vicarage. The time that had passed since then had been a time of any thing but happiness—it had been a season of continual regret, painful reflection, humble repentance,—his spirit had indeed been in a softened state, upon the whole—but deep melancholy had, nevertheless, not deserted it. Yet miserable, absolutely miserable, he certainly had not been. What was the ray that, even when he was conscious of nothing but darkness, had all the while been shining upon him?—what was the one ray of hope that had never ceased to gleam?—Alas ! he felt it but too surely, too deeply, too sorrowfully now. The image of Ellen—the anticipation of meeting her again, and of meeting her so soon—this was the one dream that had hovered near him—this was the hope that had sustained him. He had pictured, indeed, plans of labour and of self-denial, and he had persuaded himself that his spirit was

lightened by the very anticipation of toil—but frailty had blended itself even in his loftiest resolves, and now he started to find how much that mixture had deceived him. With the day or the week of solitary exertion, he had unconsciously associated the idea of that gentle approving smile—enough, a thousand times more than enough, to redeem all, to compensate all—

“A gleam of radiance heavenly bright—
An overpayment of delight.”

And now this was gone—months, long, weary months of winter, spring, summer, autumn, must pass away ere he should see her again. And what might not happen ere then?—Mr Keith had recovered for the present, but who could tell what might be the issue—how soon might his infirmities return—how soon, how suddenly might the infirmities of so old a man terminate—and then what would become of Ellen?—In the Priest’s injunction about not writing he had acquiesced; but that was in the belief of its applying only to a certain determinate period—a period of so many

weeks—how could he now dispute its propriety?—how could he write now?—and, if he did not, why might not She be removed—hid from him—lost, lost for ever?—The more he pondered upon all these things, the more painful his perplexity became. It was now, for the first time, that it occurred to him, Ellen Hesketh might very possibly have been kept in the dark as to the cause even of the silence that had already been—Mr Keith might have judged it his duty to practise something like deceit as to this matter. Reginald could scarcely say to himself, that if it had been so, the Priest had done wrong; but take the worst event—suppose the old man to be seized with sudden and fatal illness—what then must be the consequence? Would not Miss Hesketh be justified in thinking all that was ill of him? Could she possibly think otherwise? Would she have the least reason to take him into consideration in the arrangement of her future plans of life?—No. How could he tell whither she might go, in what retirement she might bury herself? Might she not even seek and find an opportunity of going back to Germany? Some of the Catholic gentry

in the vicinity of Oxford might interest themselves in procuring her the means and the permission a thousand different things might happen, by any one of which she might for ever be lost to him—ay, and lost to one whom she might justly consider as already wilfully, and by his own neglect, lost to her.

These perturbed thoughts followed each other rapidly over his mind. He traversed the garden-walk with hurried steps—he gazed wildly round upon the darkening sky—the night-breeze moaned among the branches of the trees, and heaved the lake in slow sullen surges against the pebbled strand below him. Every thing in earth and sky, in the past, the present, and the future, seemed alike waste, bleak, miserable to *him*. He smote upon his forehead, and felt as if he had laid his hand upon fire.

To this succeeded languor and total dejection. Reginald, weary of himself and of the world, passed a sleepless night, in rapid alternations of agony and listless sickness of the heart. He slept, after there was full daylight in his chamber, one

of those short hot sleeps, that exhaust, in place of refreshing the frame—and he awoke in a fever.

For two days he continued in a state that rendered it impossible for him to quit his bed ; he never lost the possession of his senses, but disease hung over his spirit, and thickened what was of itself dark enough into total gloom. His father sat watching by his bed-side—his pale anxious face was ever there—every look, every whisper, shot new pain into Reginald's lacerated bosom. At last nature was worn out—the young man slept—a long deep sleep held him—he awoke cool, calm, perfectly collected—too weak to be miserable. Involuntary tears started in his eyes, as his father, bending over him, thanked God, in a fervent ejaculation of gratitude.

The next evening Reginald was able to sit up for an hour, supported with pillows, in an easy-chair, by the fire-side. The Vicar sat over against him, whispering gentle and affectionate words—but not suffering him to make any reply.

“ My dear Reginald,” said he, “ you must not say any thing—you must just listen to me—you

must just hear me quietly, and if you have any thing to say, you must keep it till to-morrow.—I have been thinking more of what we talked of the other evening. Upon further reflection, I rather apprehend it will, after all, be best for you to go back to college next month, as we had originally intended. You know what delight it would be for me to have you here ; but that is not the only, no, nor the first matter we have to consider. Your staying away might expose us to many disagreeable things—young people will be curious and talkative. Frederick Chisney is going back directly, and we don't know what stories he might tell—I have no great faith in that young man, either in his kindness, or in his prudence. My dear boy, I could not endure the thought of your being said to have incurred my displeasure—I fear your absence might be interpreted in that way. And besides, you have a duty which must be done, and perhaps the best way is to grapple with it at once. Nay, Reginald, I see that you had been disturbed about this matter—indeed I do. I pray you forget it now—banish it entirely from your mind, my dear boy ; don't let one word

more ever pass between us about it. When you get to Oxford, you will find what you want in your pocket-book. I have put the money there this morning, just that it might be off my mind ; and I beg from my heart it may be off yours too. You must not speak, Reginald—I won't permit you to say any thing—I see quite well what is in your thoughts. Now, do be comforted and composed—you shall go back to your college, and hold up your head among them all—you will be respected, I know you will. I know you will do all that I could wish you to do. I feel quite confident, that you will earn the favour and approbation of all your superiors, and when one does that, no fear of one's equals, my dear."

Reginald returned with feeble fingers the pressure of the kind man's hand. His heart had been at his lips all the while he was speaking, and yet, now he had made an end, he knew not what he would have said, even had he been permitted to speak freely. The Vicar, however, could not be mistaken as to his looks. The father's eye read relief in every glance. " It was even so," he said to himself, " my boy feared disgrace ; and now

that he knows he is not to encounter that, he is soothed at once. To-morrow he will be himself again."

The Vicar, with this, left Reginald to himself. The young man got soon after into bed, and, weak as he was, he had strength enough to taste the luxury of falling asleep upon pleasing meditations.

In a day or two he was perfectly recovered, but the Vicar held firmly to what he had proposed, and avoided every recurrence to the painful topics. The week—the day of his departure was drawing near at hand. It seemed to be his constant endeavour to sweeten, by every act that kindness can teach, the few moments more his son was to spend in his society.

Frederick Chisney left the country a fortnight earlier than was necessary, in order to reach Oxford at the opening of the term; and, on the whole, Reginald was not sorry for this, for he probably thought he should be able to perform his journey more cheaply without than with such a companion. He was therefore looking forward to his solitary expedition, and indulging himself in such dreams as may be supposed to haunt the

breast of any young man who has been three months absent from his mistress, and has the near prospect of seeing her again, and enjoying, moreover, his approaching release from the debts that had so long been a burden to his thoughts ;— he was also enjoying the companionship of the father to whose kindness he had owed so much, and pleasing himself with fancying the gladness with which the Vicar would receive him, after an absence during which his time should really have been well and virtuously occupied, when a guest came to Lannwell, a guest whom he had never seen before—a man whose manners were as vulgar and disagreeable as his appearance was mean.

On the day preceding that fixed for his departure, he found this man sitting with his father, when he came in to dinner, and this without having received the smallest hint of any stranger being expected. The Vicar introduced him as his friend Mr Pococke, of Manchester. That name conveyed nothing, for Reginald had never heard it before ; but the longer he looked at and listened to the stranger, the more was he surprised

that such a person should have any thing to recommend him to his father.

The Vicar indeed treated him not only with civility, but betrayed in various ways, sufficiently intelligible to Reginald, that he wished to be left alone in his company. The young man could not but wonder at this, considering that it was the last evening of his stay at Lannwell. However, he took the hint, and left the table almost immediately after dinner.

He walked out, and remained in the fields for two or three hours, and when he returned, was told that the Vicar was busy with Mr Pococke in the Library, and begged Reginald would excuse them till supper-time. "Indeed, sir," said old Susan, "my master seems to be very busy.—They've been tumbling all the books about so, you have no notion; and now they're writing, writing."

The man's conversation had been evidently that of an underbred, and, as Reginald thought, an ignorant man. This new affair of the books, therefore, increased very much his perplexity; nor, when they did meet at the supper-table, was

anything said that could tend to explain this. Mr Pococke sat late, and drank a good deal, and talked louder and louder, and more and more coarsely. Reginald was to set off very early the next morning, yet the Vicar suffered him to go to his bed without saying a word that could in any way relieve his curiosity as to this stanger.

About five o'clock, Reginald drew his father's curtain to bid him farewell. The Vicar was quite awake. "God bless my dear boy!" said he.— "There were some things I would fain have spoken with you about, but Pococke occupied me so much, I could not get any opportunity; and, after all, I believe 'tis as well as it is. Let me hear from you as soon as you have been a week in your College."

"And who is Mr Pococke, father?"

"A gentleman I have some little business with, Reginald; he will probably remain here for two or three days."

Reginald perceived reserve in his father's eye, and said not a word more. Reserve in that quarter was a thing he was so little used to, that a certain degree of pain attended the observation

he could not avoid making. However, there was the very soul of tenderness in his father's look as he squeezed his hand for the last time ; and the young man felt, when he turned from his bedside, that whatever was the mystery, there was no unkindness in the concealment.

It was a chill hazy morning, the mist lay upon the lake, and none of the hills upon the other side were visible. As he mounted his horse at the vicarage-gate, he cast his eye round him, and thought Lannwell had never worn so melancholy an aspect. The air, however, braced his nerves, and he had not ridden far ere all his thoughts had flown before him to the termination of his journey.

—SED REVOCARE GRADUM.

VIRG.

BOOK V.



CHAPTER I.

OXFORD, at the opening of Michaelmas term, never fails to present a scene of great merriment and hilarity. These young companions meeting together after a separation of three or four months, bring with them new stories and new spirits, and tread with a bounding step the soil which is endeared to them by the sense of freedom from domestic authority, and the recollection of a thousand feats of undisturbed and untrammelled gaiety. They take possession of their chambers again with all the joy and pride of independence ; and, seated once more around an equal board, they fling far from them all dull remembrances of scenes where they have found themselves treated as boys, and see in every unrebuked bumper, and hear in

every fearless jest, the assertion of liberty, and the pledge of manhood. Their hearts are open and light as the day—their nerves are new-strung ; and last, not least, their purses are replenished.

The heaviest purse, however, that came on this great day to * * *, came in company with a heart that was by no means of the lightest. Reginald arrived among his old friends just as the dinner-bell was ringing, and they were all standing together in the quadrangle, waiting until the advent of the high-table gentry should permit them to enter the hall. He was received with open arms by every one—every face beamed with gladness and kindness—and a dozen different voices shouted all together,—“ Wine with me to-day, Dalton.”—“ Dalton, I say, my dear fellow, you’re not engaged for this evening ?”—“ Reginald, my hearty, I count upon you ; I have brought up some prime pheasants with me from Shropshire.”—“ Dalton, my buck, you promised to come to me before the long vacation.”—“ Reginald, I say, Reginald, the old set are to be with the batchelors,” &c. &c. &c.

Reginald resisted all these temptations the more easily, because there were so many of them. A single quiet whisper might perhaps have seduced him ; but these parties, he saw, were all to be large and noisy ones, and against such he was, because he was resolved to be, on his guard. However, the reader will perhaps give him the less credit for this piece of virtue, when he recollects that the youth had before him the prospect, not of his own solitary chamber, but of Mr Keith's tea-table, and perhaps Ellen Hesketh's smile.

He pretended to his young friends that he was engaged out of college, and was on this plea suffered to retire to his own room after dinner, without molestation. When he came to examine into the state of matters there, he found his mantle-piece garnished with a portentous collection of tradesmen's bills—[indeed the academical shopkeepers are always shrewd enough to make the first day of term their Christmas]—and when he looked over the file of papers, he no doubt shuddered to think with what unmitigated horror he must have done so, had he deferred his confession

to the Vicar, and faced them without such preparation as he was now master of.

He sat down to reckon over the amount of the demands, and I am very sure nobody will hear with the smallest surprise, that he found it considerably greater than he had calculated, although it was most true, that, when he made his calculation, he supposed himself to be making at the least a sufficiently large one. The fact is, that nobody in the world ever made any such calculation *against* himself, without falling into the same kind of blunder. There seems to be a sort of natural instinct concerned in it, which, however, is of the less importance, (at least in such cases as Reginald's,) as, by a wise arrangement, a sharp and accurate instinct is lodged elsewhere, quite sufficient to counterpoise this oblivious tendency or frailty.

Reginald, in a word, after going over the whole affair once and again very leisurely and cautiously, was compelled in the end to perceive, that there was really no mistake in his arithmetic—that his debts exceeded what was provided for

defraying them, by a sum which he knew it was quite impossible he should save out of the allowance on which he had to support himself. What was to be done? To apply again to the Vicar—this was more than he could bear to think of. Was there no way in which it might be possible for him to increase his income by honest exertion of his own? He knew of none—but he felt that there was nothing honest to which he could not stoop, and stoop with pride. It occurred to him, that he had heard of some young men of the University being employed about the Clarendon—the instant that idea suggested itself to him, he grasped at it with all the usual rapidity of his imagination. “Mr Barton,” he said to himself, “has constant connexion with that establishment: I will tell him my object; surely he will aid me; I know he will. The time for this labour shall be taken from the hours that those around me devote to their jovial parties—if that be not enough, more shall be taken from my sleep. It shall not interfere with my studies—perchance it may aid me even in them.”

To follow and obey the impulses of his imagination was his vice and his virtue. He repaired immediately to Mr Barton's apartments. He was found, as usual, busied amidst his books, and after the first salutation, which was rather a cold one, was over, Reginald could not help observing, that the Recluse was somewhat annoyed with being interrupted at such an hour.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said he, "for intruding upon you in the evening; but, to tell the truth, I have some business—I have a favour to ask of you—Will you permit me to speak?"

"It is my duty to hear you, Mr Dalton," said the tutor, shutting the book that lay before him; "but, before you say any thing, are you aware, that I have heard frequently of late from your father?"

"Then you know already, sir, what I could not have told without great pain. You are aware, Mr Barton, that I have been very foolish—You are aware of the faults that I have committed?"

The tutor nodded a grave assent.

"And of the too great kindness with which my father has treated me?"

“Nay, sir, it is not for me to speak as to these matters. I fear you have long ago become convinced of the truth of what, I think, I told you pretty distinctly the first time we met, that I was not the sort of person you should have fixed upon as your tutor. Nay, Mr Dalton, I don’t want any speeches; I *hope* things could not have fallen so, had you been more under the eye of a superior. I blame myself, young man, and I am very sorry, indeed, for my old friend.”

“You know how he has behaved to me, sir—you know how excessive his kindness has been.”

“Ay, young man, I do know it has been so. Sir, I had in my youth a very different sort of parent to deal with. My father was a severe, stern man, and he punished severely my errors; yet, now that he is in the grave, I look back to him with sorrow, and to my own transgressions of his will—all at least but one of them—with shame. Young man, you have prepared a sad retrospect indeed for your manhood.”

“O! Mr Barton, you need not torture me thus. Be assured I have felt—I do feel all this—but what is done, sir, cannot be recalled. Fain

would I do anything now, that may shew how sincere is my repentance.”

“ Then, do your duty, sir. Labour, labour diligently and zealously—you have time at least before ye.”

Reginald, without farther preface, told Mr Barton exactly the situation in which he found his affairs to be, and concluded his statement with the request which he had meditated. The tutor paused for a while, after he had made his wishes known, and then said,—“ Come, Mr Dalton, I have been doing you injustice. I see, my young friend, that you are in earnest. I fear—but, however, it is not my part to suggest these things. Come to me at eleven o’clock to-morrow, and I think I may promise that I shall have some news for you. The chapel bell has rung out. Farewell for the present.” When he had said this, Mr Barton squeezed Reginald’s hand more warmly than he had ever before done, and dismissed him.

Reginald had not for a long while been so happy as he was at the moment when he left his tutor’s apartment. He went into chapel with a glow on his cheek—a glow how different from that

which he should have brought thither, had he spent the last two hours as every other youth within these walls had spent them—a glow that came from the *mind*.

That glow was still on his cheek, and his heart beat quick and high in his bosom as he traversed, when the service was at an end, the well-known way to St Clements. A doubt—a passing shade of doubt—had sometimes hovered over his fancy before ; but now there was no room for anything that partook of doubt. Everything cold—everything of hesitation—everything of fear, had vanished from beside the kindling excitation which had taken possession of his thoughts. He advanced to the house with a rapid step, and knocked with an eager hand. A light footstep was heard within. The sweetest voice in the world whispered through the key-hole,—“ Who is there ? is it you, Mr Keith ? ”

“ It is I,” said Reginald—“ Open, I pray you, my dear Ellen.” And the next moment the door was opened. It was almost quite dark, and he could not see the workings of her face ; but he felt the trembling of the hand that was half sci-

zed, half surrendered—he felt the beating of the bosom that he strained to his with involuntary strength—he felt the eloquent blood rush into, and in the same breath desert again, the timid trembling lip—that lip had never touched before.

Ellen started after a moment, and withdrew herself from Reginald's arms. "O Mr Dalton," she whispered, "how can you behave so? My uncle is not at home—What will he say if he finds you here with me alone?"

"Say, Ellen? God bless my soul, what should he say? But how is he?—Tell me, my dear girl—Is he well, is he strong, is he quite himself again?—And how has the summer gone over with you? Come, Ellen, my own Ellen! you must sit down by me, and let us talk over all that has happened since we parted—indeed you must—I cannot think of leaving you now."

The poor girl suffered herself to be persuaded, and led Reginald into the parlour. The fear that she was in some sort doing what was wrong, could not prevent her from being happy, nor teach her the art of concealing that she was so. They sat together—sometimes there was not a word said

for minutes on either side, and then would come a flow of tender words, or a more eloquent whisper of tenderness. But why attempt to describe the indescribable? Let it be enough, that Reginald poured out all his heart—told all his feelings, the painful and the pleasurable, and enjoyed that luxury to which earth has nothing equal—the luxury of feeling that there was one gentle bosom which made all that was his its own—which partook, and ever would partake, the best and the worst that had befallen, or ever could befall him.

It was perhaps just as well for our young people that Mr Keith had been dining that day with a very gay and pleasant party, at the house of Dr R——, one of the few leading characters of the University, with whom he had formed acquaintance. To say truth, the good old man had conceived a most warm and fatherly affection for Reginald Dalton; but he had, in his absence, made up his mind, that his own duty to Miss Hesketh must prevent him from suffering them to be very much together, under what he rightly supposed to be the present doubtful situation of Reginald's affairs. Besides, he certainly had a feeling that it was very

possible Mr Dalton might disapprove of this alliance altogether; and, last not least, he would have been anxious to put so very young a man's attachment to the test of time, even had circumstances been different from what they were in all other respects. When, however, he entered his own house that evening, he was, to speak gently, a little elevated with wine, and that stimulus never failed to put him in a mood of such perfect good humour, that it was no wonder his prudential resolutions gave way when he saw them together; and that, reading their happiness in their eyes and their blushes, he could not find it in his heart to do or say anything that might tend to throw a damp upon their young spirits. He tried to look a little grave on his first entrance, and shook his head once or twice; but the fire was bright, and Ellen had his slippers, and his pipe, and his coffee, all in readiness for him; and Reginald's joy in seeing him so much re-established was so visible in every look and gesture of the young man, that, altogether, the priest found the utmost he could do was to shake his head a few

times more, light his tube, and sit down between them, a partaker, not a chider of their happiness.

Reginald told all his story over again, and Mr Keith listened to its progress with scarcely less interest, and to its conclusion with scarcely less satisfaction, than Miss Hesketh had done. "Ah, yes, my young friend," said he, "I see we shall make a man of you yet. You will find, my dear, that the sweetest morsel in the world is the first your own hands help you to. Go on, Reginald, keep a right heart, and all will go well with you. Your father is a good man, my dear, and a good Christian ; and, let me tell you, it should be no little matter for you to think that you have it in your power to make that kind heart happy, if you but do your duty."

"Some day," said Reginald, "some happy, happy day, I hope you and he, sir, will meet and be friends ; then, indeed, I shall know what happiness is."

Reginald looked to Ellen, and read the echo of his feeling in one soft glance. The worthy old man, without saying anything, pressed his hand. The clock struck at that moment, and Reginald

rose immediately, for he was anxious to be in College ere the gates were closed. The Priest whispered in his ear, "When are we to see you again?—Ellen, my love, what say you?—Well, well, dears, I see how it is; we shall not shut our doors, although you come back to-morrow and tell us what Mr Barton says to you."

CHAPTER II.

NEXT day, when Reginald waited, according to appointment, upon his tutor, he found there a certain Oxford bookseller, to whom, after finding that the printing establishment of the University was not at that time in want of any such services as our young man had proposed offering, Mr Barton had applied for something of the same sort, and, as it happened, with greater success. In a word, Reginald was forthwith entrusted, Mr Barton vouching very liberally for his fitness to execute the task, with the labour of correcting the press for an edition of one of the Greek historians, which this Mecænas was just about to commence—and though under any other circumstances, no doubt, this occupation must have presented itself in the light of a piece of most wearisome drudgery, to say nothing of the mean amount of remuneration that was to attend it, Reginald

Dalton retired from the ratification of the bargain with feelings, not only of satisfaction, but even of exultation.

His life soon shaped itself into a course of equal and regular occupation. His debts, all but those which, because the sums were the smallest, he considered as of the least importance to him, were paid. His mind, the heaviest part of that burden thrown off, bent the whole of its powers to study during the greater part of the day ; some hours were devoted to the humble task which he had undertaken, and dull as these were, he was sustained in them by the consciousness of a virtuous motive, besides the additional comfort which he drew from perceiving, that the manner in which they were spent must inevitably be of great advantage in the end to his scholarship, by reason of the nice and precise accuracy of attention which he was compelled to bestow upon matters, that otherwise he could scarcely have been blamed for almost entirely neglecting. The sneers which he sometimes encountered from the young men about him, on account of the pertinacity with which he avoided their parties of pleasure, he learned to endure more ea-

sily in process of a little time ; and ere a month had passed, these were well nigh discontinued on all hands. The style in which he acquitted himself at the public examinations in the College-hall, attracted the notice of his superiors, and compelled the respect of his equals. His laborious day generally terminated in a short visit to Mr Keith's, where the approving smile of Ellen rewarded him for what was past, and gave him new courage for the toil that was to come ; while the paternal commendations of the old Priest afforded a kindred, and scarcely a feebler stimulus. Every week he wrote to his father, and his letters exhibited that openness and freedom of communication, which it is difficult or impossible for one that is conscious of being engaged in evil courses, to make or even to counterfeit, when addressing such a person as the Vicar. His father's answers overflowed with kindness and satisfaction—and, in a word, perhaps I should not be exceeding the mark, if I said that Reginald, since he first left his father's fire-side, had never before tasted the calm sweets of perfect mental repose,—nay, that the happiness which he experienced now, the happiness of ap-

proving love and of exerted manhood, was something infinitely higher and richer than that which he had enjoyed, even during the most innocent and the most careless years of his dreaming boyhood.

During the best part of two months, this fortunate state of things continued. It was then that, from various unhappily coinciding circumstances, a shade of gloom began once more to invest his mind, his affairs, and his prospects.

It has been mentioned above, that, in regard to his debts, Reginald had allowed those which were of the least amount to lie over, in his anxiety to get rid of such as alarmed him by their heaviness and magnitude. This proceeding, however natural under all the circumstances of the case, was exactly what any person of larger experience in the world must have taken especial care to avoid. The sums still due were due to comparatively poor people; and these, besides the inconvenience to which non-payment really did expose some of them, were all extremely incensed, when they found that their debtor had found means to discharge obligations of very superior weight to their richer and more fortunate brothers of the trade. They waited for

a few weeks without murmuring ; but when another term had elapsed, and still no word of money from Mr Dalton, several began to lose patience, and to pester him first with ugly little scraggy wafered notes, and then with the bodily apparition of their own lean unwashed faces in his apartment. Determined not to draw upon the Vicar, and compelled to reserve the pittance his own exertion had enabled him to muster, for the acquittal of his debt to the Buttery-book of * * *, our young gentleman was grievously annoyed with things that, under any other circumstances, would have administered matter of high merriment to him. Raw as he was, he had sense enough to observe, that, if he had not paid one single sixpence of all the debt he had contracted, but, on the contrary, continued to go on in the same career of carelessness and extravagance, which he had so penitently abandoned, he should have escaped, at least for a long while, from this species of visible and tangible vexation. He perceived that the striking reduction he had made in his mode of living, had excited more attention to him and his affairs, than the most riotous profusion

of expenditure could have done ; that these mean spirits had penetrated the secret of his domestic difficulties ; and that he must expect to be harassed every succeeding day with greater pertinacity and impertinence of solicitation.

When he allowed these gentry to make their way into his study, the cold dirty glances with which they accompanied and enforced their unwelcome rhetoric, haunted him for half the day after. If he followed the common Oxonian example, and “ sported oak,” the single tap, the shuffling of feet, the hem of disappointment, found their way through the pannel, and perhaps hurt his nerves, even more than actual confronting of the visitor might have done. One inflexible and iron countenance was sure to be discovered each day, when he opened his door to go down to dinner in the hall—waiting there with a settled frown, until the diurnal whisper should have been answered with the diurnal shake, and then vanishing with a darker and more moody tinge upon the furrowed brow. Another spirit of a lighter and politer order came only once a-week, and never came twice at the same hour, now establishing

himself at Reginald's fire-side, ere he had left his bed in the morning—now appalling him with the profoundest of obeisances in the street or the quadrangle—now causing the door to be expanded by a deceitful double knock, a liberty entirely unwarrantable in these plebeian fingers—in a word, practising a thousand new artifices and devices, all, whatever might have been the fond hope of the individual, alike incapable of rendering a whit more palatable the one unvarying sentence with which they all alike ended.

These disagreeably officious guests not only annoyed the young man's feelings, but, through them, injured him in matters of a more substantial nature. The annoyance that irritated and perplexed him rendered him incapable of attending to his books and papers with the same steady zeal which he had heretofore obeyed and enjoyed. They often kept him idle; and although he knew that poverty was the sure consequence of yielding, he had not the stubborn self-command to wrestle successfully with the "*improba Siren Desidia*." In short, he sunk too frequently into a listless and desponding mood, the unhappy effect of

which was to make that exertion, by which alone it could have been baffled and put to flight, appear as something utterly loathsome and insufferable.

The change which all this produced on Reginald's aspect and demeanour, could not escape the eyes of Ellen Hesketh ; but, alas ! seeing the change, she guessed not at the cause. Mr Keith had again begun to droop ; this filled Ellen's own heart with pensiveness, and knowing how deeply Reginald sympathized with her feelings in regard to that kind old friend and protector, she was at no loss to account for all the darkness that hovered on her lover's brow, without penetrating into his own secret griefs. But indeed, it is probable, that *as yet*, when Reginald was with her and the Priest, she might have erred, after all, if she had attributed his visible dejection to any other cause but that which really suggested itself to her affectionate imagination.

CHAPTER III.

REGINALD was sitting by himself one morning in a very deplorable state of pensiveness, when he was surprised by the receipt of a note from Mr Keith. The old man began with saying that he felt himself better that day than he had done for two or three weeks; he then expressed his apprehension that Miss Hesketh had been injuring herself of late by too strict confinement to the house, and concluded with mentioning, that an old widow of his congregation, whom Reginald had occasionally met with at St Clements, was going to a concert the same evening, and had invited Ellen to be of her party. The scheme, Mr Keith said, had easily met with his own approbation, and that, after a little hesitation, Ellen herself had agreed to accompany Mrs Gibbons, not doubting that Mr Dalton would be happy to go along with them, and see her home in safety at night.

Our young man, although even the cost of a concert ticket was something to him in the present situation of his finances, could not, of course, hesitate about this affair. He dressed himself and accompanied Mrs Gibbons and Ellen to the scene of their amusement, and enjoyed, during the intervals of the music, the charming conversation of his fair one, who—rejoicing in the favourable change which seemed to have taken place in Mr Keith's health, and elevated with those feelings naturally excited by the spectacle of a gay saloon and a brilliant company, and the luxuries of harmony, and the presence of a lover who could not, more than herself, be insensible to such fascinations—looked and whispered everything that was cheerful, cheering, and angelic. Between the second and third acts, Frederick Chisney, with whom the reader will easily suppose Reginald had of late held but rare communication, came up with an air of kindness which it was impossible to resist, and after conversing for a little while about Lannwell, Thorwold, and their common friends in the country, begged Reginald to introduce him to Miss Hesketh, who seemed, as he said, to have retained no re-

collection of his person. This request was conveyed in a whisper, and accompanied with some flattering compliments and congratulations, which were not without their effect on Reginald's vanity. He did what Chisney had asked, and that young gentleman, nothing daunted by a little reserve in the outset, found means, ere the concert was at an end, to charm Mrs Gibbons, by the gaiety of his address, and the handsomeness of his person ; and to insinuate himself into some favour also with Miss Hesketh, who could not but observe that Frederick concealed, beneath a surface of frivolity, a great share of sense, shrewdness, and wit. He knew everybody—he explained everything—he criticised the music with taste, and the company with humour ; and altogether the time passed so merrily, that there was not one of the four who did not wish very devoutly the entertainment had been to last twice its hours.

Mrs Gibbons, however, had tacked something more to the musical part of her scheme, and now announced, not without throwing an additional spice of good-humoured satisfaction into her round plump physiognomy, that she would consider herself but

an ill-treated woman, if Miss Hesketh and the two young gentlemen refused to partake of a couple of roasted fowls and sausages, and a can of mulled elder-wine, which she had ordered to be in readiness at her dwelling. As that was in the immediate vicinity of Mr Keith's house, our sparks, who were to escort the young lady thither, were easily persuaded to approve of this arrangement; and Ellen herself, after some little argumentation, found it impossible to refuse her consent. The old lady conducted them into a snug parlour, where a blazing fire and a snowy table-cloth already gave promise of good cheer. The substantial comforts of which she had discoursed, were not long of making their appearance, and great justice was done to their merits by all concerned. An hour was spent in the happiest and gayest style imaginable — Ellen smiled, the landlady chuckled, and Reginald forgot all his griefs, and Frederick Chisney's admiration of the young lady was only inferior to that which shone in the modest glances of his companion.

Reginald and Chisney, after seeing Miss Hesketh safe within her uncle's gates, walked up the

town arm-in-arm, talking to each other with more of the freedom of their first companionship than they had for a long while been accustomed to. Chisney rated Reginald kindly and good-humouredly upon the subject of his new seclusion, and told him over and over again, that whatever reasons he might have for avoiding parties and expenses, he could have no good reason for withdrawing himself entirely from the society of the oldest friend he had in Oxford; a friend who would at any time be glad to give up a noisy company for the sake of spending an evening quietly with him, in hearing and telling old stories, and discussing the authors with whom each, or both, might have been occupied. This sort of thing was said with an air of such sincerity and affection, that Reginald could not help feeling something like compunction with himself for having, in so far, doubted the friendship, and avoided the society, of his old associate. They parted in high cordiality, but not until Reginald had promised to spend the next evening at Christ Church, in the way which Chisney had proposed.

I am extremely sorry to say, that Mr Chisney's behaviour, on this occasion, was by no means of the most ingenuous. That he had originally liked Reginald Dalton, and sought a simple and natural gratification in associating with him, is true. It is also true, that his vanity had been flattered with the opportunity which Reginald afforded him, of shewing off his own skilful qualifications in the various walks of dissipation, before the eyes of a clever, and admiring, and emulating fresh-man. But the disciple had soon equalled the proficiency of the preceptor—too soon, alas ! for his own welfare, and too soon also for Chisney's expectation or approbation. In a word, Reginald had, ere long, come to be Chisney's rival in many of those things on which he chiefly rested his pride, his superior in some, and his inferior in but a few. The young man had not made this rapid progress without some feelings of self-complacency, and more than once words or looks had escaped him, too expressive of those feelings, to find favour with his quondam guide, who still hankered after the retaining of that air

of superiority, which he had at first been entitled to assume, and that tribute of deference and submission, which he had supposed Reginald was to pay long and regularly, but which, he now perceived, was likely to fall into total desuetude, if not oblivion. In short, Reginald's successes, in more styles than we think it at all necessary to particularize, during his first Oxonian campaign, had kindled certain sparks of jealousy, slumbering in the disposition of his friend ; and as such feelings seldom exist anywhere, without being, through some sort of natural instinct, it would seem, detected by those most nearly concerned, these two young men had arrived at the beginning of this last winter in their respective colleges, with but little inclination to renew the strict intimacy in which they had lived during the preceding season.

Reginald's method of living, for the last two or three months, had not, of course, tended to break down the barriers of coldness, to which we have now alluded. Chisney, alike fearful as fond of ridicule, would, under no circumstances, have considered the reputation of living as the bosom

friend of one, whose style of existence resembled that now adopted by our repentant hero. Reginald, on the other hand, was about as proud as Frederick was vain; and conscious that he was doing what was right, and at last, after dear lessons, sensible to the luxury of that consciousness, he was in no danger either of pressing himself on his retreating friend, or of deserting the path he had chosen in compliment to his fancies. The truth is, that our youth had tasted the bitter dregs of the cup of folly, and whatever might have happened, had a totally new set of sirens invited him to fill and quaff it again, he was quite proof against that particular species of seduction, the consequences of yielding to which were so fresh in his recollection.

Why, then, this sudden and unlooked-for up-making? The answer is very briefly—Mr Chisney had been quite overcome with admiration by the radiant beauty, the charming sprightliness, the universal gracefulness, of Miss Ellen Hesketh. In the ardour of the moment, he determined to see more of this fair and forlorn creature. He knew nothing, perhaps as yet he even suspected

nothing, of the solemn ties which existed between her and Dalton ; but he saw quite plainly, that it was only through Dalton's means he himself could hope to have access to her in the first instance. In the hope that Mrs Gibbons might be of subordinate service in the same matter, he, the vainest and the gayest of Oxonian beaux, did not hesitate to lavish all his arts of flattery upon that vulgar old body ; but it was by restoring his intimacy of companionship with Reginald, that he expected to gain admittance to the domestic society in which Miss Hesketh lived. Once fairly introduced and established there, he did not doubt that he should soon find, in his own many admirable qualifications, the means of pushing his success as far as circumstances might induce him to think desirable.

The fact is, that one may search the world over without meeting with a creature worthy, in regard to a certain sort of overbearing, intolerable arrogance, to be set in competition with a finished young buck of Rhedycina. Somehow or other, Heaven knows whence or how, the notion has taken complete and ineradicable root among them, that

they are the true "*prima virorum*"—above all, they have taught themselves to regard every thing, and every body connected in any way with that town, and not connected with their university, as dust, absolute dust—men, women, and children, as all alike belonging to a separate, distinct, and unchangeable caste, as different from their own as the coarsest blue delft-ware is from the most precious nankin china. The men are all jumbled together under the one comprehensive epithet of *raff*; and the women, however fair, however lovely, are considered as but amiable little *bourgeoises*, who ought to look on themselves as but too happy in being permitted to furnish the most transitory amusement to themselves—the elite of the world. In their gowns and tufted-caps, they reverence the robes and coronets of an inalienable and unapproachable *noblesse*; and decked out in these all exalting insignia, you shall see the son of a London tailor strut past an Oxford tailor on the street of a city, of which he is perhaps mayor, with a beak as extravagantly aduncated, as if there were "more difference between their bloods, than there is betwixt red wine and Rhenish."

In these prejudices Mr Frederick Chisney partook as largely as any of his compeers—if not more excusably, still certainly much less absurdly, than a vast proportion of them. The obscure Scotch-German priest of an obscure little Catholic chapel, in the suburbs of Oxford, appeared to him in the light of a personage of the most humble order possible ; and his niece, immeasurably removed, as she seemed to be, from all contact with the only female society in Oxford that he deigned to consider as in any sort *comme il faut*, was nothing in his eyes but a beautiful *grisette*, by a flirtation, carried how far soever, with whom, no serious consequences of any kind could ever be entailed upon *him*. Mr Chisney, therefore, no sooner saw and admired, than he in fancy conquered ; but his passions, though sufficiently inflammable, being by no means suffered to cloud his judgment, he perceived all the propriety of going cautiously to work *in limine*, and determined, in opening his trenches, to take full advantage of Dalton's previous acquaintance with the localities of the soil, and the temper, character, and resources of the besieged.

Mr Chisney (for passions of some sorts are at times heated rather than cooled by a night's consultation of the pillow,) rose in the morning even fuller of all these pretty fancies than he had lain down. Though he had received Reginald's promise to come to his rooms the same evening, his revived affection could not brook even this delay, and he called at * * * College, in the course of the forenoon, to ask his friend's company in a walk over the Port Meadow. Reginald, who had as usual been fretted with sundry "monotapic" visitors, did not open his door until Chisney's voice made assurance double sure this was no cunning citizen turning his knuckles into gay deceivers. Even when he did open, something remained on his physiognomy, which, taken together with the delay that had occurred, soon suggested the true state of affairs to Mr Frederick. But he had scarcely sat down ere one of the "unwelcome race, in evil hour begot," did really make his invasion. Reginald seemed to hesitate about answering the knock, and Chisney whispered, with a knowing look,—“Are ye short, Reginald? Come, come, pay off the dog and have done with him.” So say-

ing, the young gentleman exhibited a well-furnished pocket-book. And "Nay, nay," he proceeded, still in the same low note, "you're not going to stand upon trifles with me, Dalton?"

Reginald, half surprised, half unable to resist, accepted the small sum which he knew would satisfy the visitor, whose visage, *soit dit en passant*, he had already found means to reconnoitre through a crack in the lath and plaster of his coal-hole. A smile of the most benignant blandness instantaneously relaxed the rigid lips of the creditor; but perhaps, of all the three, the one most pleased with this little occurrence was Chisney himself.

Reginald walked out with Chisney according to his request, and the reader will not be astonished to hear, that although they set out in exactly the opposite direction, it was so contrived, that they must needs re-enter the city by the way of St Clements. When they came to the Priest's door, Chisney said,—what Dalton had been thinking ever since they came within sight of it,—that they ought to call and inquire whether the young lady had received no damage from being out so late over-

night. And in accordingly they both went, Reginald having, in the fullness of his heart, undertaken that Mr Keith would not consider his friend as an intruder. The old man, as it happened, was still better this day than he had been the day before, and Ellen had just been gratifying him very much by playing over to him on her guitar some of the airs she had heard at her concert. He was delighted to see Reginald, and though at first there was nothing beyond bare politeness in his reception of Chisney, that knowing fellow made so good a use of his opportunity, that ere they rose to depart, the Priest was quite captivated with his address and conversation. The young man, in fact, had said very little, but he had given all his attention to the senior, and while Reginald was talking to Ellen, played off, on the other side of the fire-place, all the arts of drawing out, listening, and assenting. He had dropt hints of his contempt for the common Oxonian prejudices against Catholics—he had quoted a verse or two of Allan Ramsay—he had sworn that if he were reduced to Clarence's election, he would expire in a butt of old hock—*apropos* to the priest's Meerschaum

which graced the mantle-piece, he had taken occasion to laud Sir Walter Rawleigh, and the philosophic luxury of the Nicotian creed ; and last, not least, he had admired the Mezzotinto print of Marshall Keith, and, of course, been entertained in return with some anecdotes touching the consanguinity of the ancient Lords of Dunnottar, and the bold Barons of Keithquhangs.

The effect of all this was, that Mr Keith invited Reginald to bring his friend to dinner with him in the course of the following week ; and then so adroitly did Chisney pursue the advantage he had gained, that, ere he went away, the Priest had promised, his health permitting, to give him his revenge ere long, in his chambers at Christ-Church.

CHAPTER IV.

CHISNEY took such care to remind the Priest of the promise above-mentioned, that the old man, ere a fortnight was over, took the opportunity of some fine frosty weather, and nerves braced thereby, to redeem it. Reginald, out of respect for Mr Keith, broke through all his rules, and joined and enjoyed the party, which was exactly what a party should be; for the host was indefatigable in his attention and complaisance, the guests were few and well-assorted, the wines were Latimer's, and the dinner was cooked in Christ-Church.

The worthy old Priest was so much the happier, that he had of late (from his situation here, and from the state of his health,) been but little accustomed to those pleasures of the festive board, for which a Scotch youth and a German manhood had inspired him with a pretty keen relish. He got into great glee in the course of the evening,

and even laid aside so much of his sacerdotal dignity, as to contribute more than one song to the entertainment of the company. His songs were German, and he possessed a faculty, rarely met with out of Germany, of imitating with his voice all manner of musical instruments, from the organ to the Jew's-harp, which new and delightful accomplishment was continually exhibited between the stanzas, and in swelling the chorus of his strains. Above all, he excited prodigious admiration among his youthful auditors, by the exquisite vigour and grace with which he gave that famous old monastic Anacreontic,

“ Disce bene, Clerice, virgines amare,
Wohl ist mir im grünen waldt,” &c.

—so much so, that Mr Chisney took occasion to declare, that he for one would think it a shame to remain any longer in ignorance of the fine and sonorous language, which at present concealed from him the exact meaning and connexion of the spirit-stirring ditty.

Mr Keith forthwith favoured them with an extemporary translation of the German parts of the song ; and then Chisney's rapture rose to even

a higher pitch than before. The Priest and he soon got into a committee upon German roots, German gutturals, Goethe, Schiller, Archenholz, Klopstock, Wieland, and Hagedorn. Old Keith, whose lips had so long been sealed upon these charming topics, now expatiated in glowing whispers, bumpers of some delicate enough Johannisberg, which Chisney had procured for the occasion, washing down every dissertation. Pipes and tobacco, in scorn of all Christ-Church niceties, were introduced ; and Chisney, at the risk of mortal sickness, filled and smoked like a dragon. A cloud of fragrant obscurity, more delectably opaque than that which enshrouded the endearments of Jupiter and Juno on the summit of Ida, completed the privacy, and thickened the confidence—until, in the process of his exaltation, the old Priest at last hinted, that, since there was no German teacher in the University, he himself would be too happy to initiate this young enthusiast in the true High Saxon pronunciation, and to introduce him to some acquaintance with the glorious masterpieces of Teutonic genius, so shamefully unappreciated on this side of the water.

The fervour of gratitude with which Mr Frederick Chisney embraced this beneficent offer, may easily be imagined by the reader.

The arrangement, thus hastily and easily accomplished, answered all Mr Chisney's expectations, so far as the worthy Keith was concerned. He had taken particular care to fix upon an hour at which he knew Dalton to be strictly engaged within his own college; and thus he had the Priest's lessons all to himself, which, to say truth, Reginald regretted the less, as he flattered himself he should in due time have abundant opportunities of studying the German tongue under the auspices of a still more agreeable teacher.

Meantime Chisney pushed his advantage. He had not indeed received many lessons, ere the returning infirmities of his ancient preceptor interrupted their sequence; but ere this he had established himself so firmly in the old man's good graces, that that circumstance came to be of little importance. The worse Mr Keith's health was, the better excuse had he for being a daily visitor in St Clements. He timed his calls, so that he but seldom encountered Dalton there;

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and by degrees he even contrived to have it so, that, without exciting any sort of surprise, his diurnal inquiries were not rarely made at seasons when the invalid himself could not be visible—and Miss Hesketh alone was in a condition to receive and entertain him.

Lively, cheerful, well-informed, and consummately artful in the affectation of deep and sincere interest and sympathy, as he was, it is no wonder that his visits were the reverse of disagreeable to a young lady, naturally of a happy social disposition, living in so solitary a manner, and in continual attendance upon a frail and drooping old man, whose spirits, high as they were in common, could not always withstand the depressing influences of his situation ; but this, though much, was not all.

Reginald Dalton's troubles had been thickening all this while around him. The paying of the one dun, whom Chisney's casual presence had enabled him to dismiss, had of course served only to embitter the spleen, and redouble the attacks, of the others. And upon the heels of all this came another, and a still more serious evil. The

work on which he had been occupied was drawing near to a close—and when he made any inquiries after the prospect of another engagement of the same species, his bibliopolic Mecænas had, on divers occasions, shrugged up his shoulders, intimating that his spirit of adventure rarely went beyond one speculation of that kind *per annum*. He saw, therefore, the near likelihood of being left exactly in the same painful situation, from which this little job had, to a certain extent, relieved him; and the more he meditated upon this, and his determined duns, and Keith's illness, and the darkness which, in the event of its terminating ere long fatally, hung over the future destinies of his mistress—the more dismal were the colours which every thing assumed, the more did his hope, and even perhaps his resolution, droop.

That when the heart is sick, the temper is, in frail human breasts, but too apt to catch a tinge of sourness, we must all know very well from experience, from observation, or from both. It was even so with this unfortunate young gentleman. It need not be disguised, that the distresses which

preyed upon his bosom irritated, while they gnawed ; that his brow wore a shade of melancholy, which at times deepened into sullenness ; that his mode of speaking partook occasionally of the hasty and the splenetic ; that starts of peevishness chequered the settled gloom of his despondence. Even in the presence of Miss Hesketh, these symptoms of internal laceration could not always be concealed. The poor girl observed them with eyes quickened by the most delicate and tender attachment. She questioned him, and, such, alas ! may be the waywardness of a stung and exacerbated spirit, his answers, brief, mysterious, and half impatient, were sometimes but little calculated to allay the uneasiness of her affectionate bosom.

The bursts of fervid tenderness, and the gushings of deep confiding sorrow, that in less moody moments flowed from him, and blended both their hearts in the sad and solemn luxuries of the most passionate communion—these indeed atoned for all. Nevertheless, it was not to be wondered at, if Ellen Hesketh's gentle breast, wounded and

harassed with these painful alternations, partook at times of the irritability, as well as of the dejection, of her lover—nor that in these, by far the most unhappy of her hours, she found something to sooth and to refresh in the calm, graceful, ever-varying interest of Mr Chisney's conversation—his airy good-humour, checked and restrained only by concern for the malady of her own best friend, a civility that had long ere now glided into the warmth of kindness, and flatteries not the less insidious, because they were lightly, cautiously, guardedly, and apparently involuntarily, if not unconsciously, administered.

In the mean time, this knowing fellow was by no means neglecting the old Priest. His visits were occasionally admitted, even when Mr Keith was confined to his bed-chamber, and he never failed to cheer and enliven the invalid ere he left him.

He found means, on some of these occasions, to get into rather confidential conversation with the old man—he took care to ask and to receive some advice with an air of great humility and thankfulness

—and, on the other hand, Mr Keith did not hesitate to communicate some of his own little subjects of uneasiness. Among these, not the least, was Reginald Dalton, whose unpropitious state of mind had by no means escaped attention in this, any more than in other quarters. Mr Chisney entered warmly into the old gentleman's concern—he praised Reginald, and praised him zealously—he bore testimony to the excellence of his dispositions, and the quickness of his talents—he commended the delicacy of feeling, manifested in his recent retrenchment of expense—but at the same time hinted, how excessively absurd his previous conduct in that way had been—shook his head very sagaciously, in alluding to the ridiculous ideas which some young men were apt to entertain of their own consequence, and the silly vanity which many of them betrayed, in imitating a style of life which could only be adopted with propriety by those born in another sphere of society—and concluded with expressing his hope, that, in spite of the temptations to which young men of unequal spirits and eager fancy are so

peculiarly exposed, his dear friend Dalton would have resolution enough to persevere in the laudable courses he seemed of late to have followed.—These remarks were interspersed with sundry little hints about the hardship the Daltons had sustained, in the total transference (for such it might now be considered) of the family estates into the hands of another race—the poverty of the Vicar's living—and how much more desirable it was than probable, that a young man, with so few natural connexions as Reginald, should be soon and decently provided for in the Church of England—a church in which, however high might be its merits as to other things, even the highest talents, he was sorry to observe, did not always command that attention which was paid to them in some other establishments, and more especially, if he might trust the imperfect information he had been able to receive, in that of the Church of Rome.

These observations, dropping, to all appearance, half involuntarily from a person who had been introduced to Mr Keith's acquaintance by Reginald

himself, and of whose merits, moral and intellectual, Reginald's own report had inspired him with a high opinion, could not be listened to with indifference, or meditated upon afterwards without very considerable uneasiness. Nothing could shake the sincere and warm affection which the old man had conceived for Reginald Dalton ; yet it must not be concealed, that such hints and insinuations, so artfully administered, and in themselves, for the most part, carrying so fair and reasonable an aspect, produced no trivial effects. The worthy old man, in a word, often felt disposed to curse the rashness with which he himself had behaved at Godstow, and to nourish a strong wish that he had it in his power, even now, to break off that intercourse between the young man and his ward, to which he had hitherto, he feared, afforded by far too much countenance. Nor did Reginald, whom the feeling and irritation of his poverty rendered abundantly quick-sighted and sensitive, fail to take notice, in due time, of the air of reserve which these feelings could not but communicate to the countenance and conversation of

his old friend. Nor did this, it may easily be imagined, at all tend either to sooth his internal troubles, or to invest him with a more philosophic control over his deportment.

CHAPTER V.

REGINALD'S cup of distress, swelled by the various mingling elements to which we have already alluded, at last approached the moment when a single drop more was to be enough to make its bitterness overflow.

He rose one morning with something of an angry recollection of Mr Keith's behaviour towards him the preceding evening—with a reproachful consciousness, still more painful to him, that he himself had looked and spoken upon that occasion in a way that must have wounded the gentle heart of Ellen Hesketh—with the knowledge that that very day was to terminate his engagement with the bookseller—with a hot brow, and a bosom heavy to weariness. One of those familiar sulky faces, which had haunted him in his troubled dreams, failed not, in due time, to present itself before him in the flesh. He locked his door

in utter desperation, and sat down to indulge in cold and miserable broodings over all his calamity.

After doing so for some time, he roused himself to finish the last sheet of his labours, which had been left lying unopened for two or three days upon his table, from a sort of sickly reluctance to see the end of it. Having done this, Reginald at last, after a struggle of which we shall spare the description, wrote a letter to his father, in which he detailed his sufferings and his necessities, and his fears ; and then, eager to have done with a thing that had cost him so much torture, away he went to the post-office, to put his letter out of his sight and his reach.

He flung it in the moment he had come to the place, and turned to retrace his steps homeward in a mood of fixed, determined, and savage gloom. In going to his College, however, he had to pass the shop of the bookseller with whom he had had his dealings, and he stepped into it for a moment to deliver the last fragment of his task. He asked for his friend, and was invited to sit down for a few minutes, as he was not yet come from his dwelling-house.

Reginald accordingly was amusing, or seeming to amuse himself, with looking over some new publications that were scattered about this Temple of the Muses, when his attention was called by one of the shop-boys to a pile of books which they had been busy in arranging upon the floor ; a new acquisition, as the lad said, and comprehending some articles of great rarity, which might probably interest Mr Dalton.

“ Boy,” said Reginald, after a moment’s pause, “ Where did your master get this book ? I know this book well, sir. How—when—I demand—answer me—when—how was this obtained ?”

“ Indeed, I can’t tell, sir.—Ned, I say—knowey where them old books come from, Neddy ?”

“ And here, sir—here’s another book that I know—that I have known all my life. And here, as I live, here’s another—and another ! There’s been theft, sir, or robbery here. Do you see the arms are effaced ? Look here, sir, why there’s a whole library !”

The bookseller himself, who happened to enter the shop just at that moment, came up with a smiling face to the place where Reginald was stand-

ing, and having overheard enough to perceive that he was making inquiry about these newly-arrived books, took upon himself the trouble of satisfying him. “O, Mr Dalton—your servant, Mr Dalton; and so you’re looking over them there books—they’re not arranged yet, sir, nor catalogued, nor even marked; but, on the whole, I think you will find some valuable editions—a very fine set of Elzevirs, Mr Dalton. And do but look at this little Aldus here—never saw a more perfect jewel. And here again, sir, here are also all the Dutch folios—the Dionysius—do but observe it, sir—what a margin—what binding—the original vellum, sir—no paltry new gilding here, Mr Dalton. But you won’t look at the Dionysius, I think, sir?”

“I beg your pardon, Mr —, but I believe I spoke rather hastily ere you came in. I thought I had seen that book, and some of the others, before. May I ask how they happened to come into your hands?”

“Ah! you’re north-country, I believe, Mr Dalton? I daresay you may have seen some of them there books before—they came from Man-

chester, sir. Did you ever chance to look into old Pococke's, in that town, sir? A queer old fellow is Pococke, Mr Dalton, but a knowing one in his way, sir—a sharp eye at an auction, sir. Many very extraordinary articles have found their way into Master Pococke's, that I shall say for him. I think he said something in his letter.—Fetch Mr Pococke's letter of the 9th, Ned.—Ay, here it is. Here's what Pococke says,—‘ The library of a respectable clergyman in Westmoreland, warranted genuine—all in best order—particularly rich in Dutch classics—large paper, uncut Stephanus, Greek—ditto, ditto, Latin.’ That's all he says about the collection, however. Upon my word, Mr Dalton, I have just given him his own terms, and slumped the affair.”

But Reginald had heard quite enough, long before this man came to the end of his dissertation. He cast a hasty glance over the books, with every one of which he had been acquainted since his earliest days; and bowing abruptly, was about to quit the shop, lest his agony should betray itself. The bookseller, who observed something of his agitation, attributed it to his being uneasy, which

indeed he well knew him to be, on account of the termination of the labour in which he had been employed. He called him aside, and put into his hands the small sum that was still due on that score, and dismissed him with some coarse, but kindly-meant hints, "that perhaps after all, under certain circumstances, if certain things, as it were, should turn out so and so, it might not be very long until something of a certain sort might offer."

The moment Reginald was disengaged from this scene, he walked, or rather ran, back to the post-office. He entered the place breathless, and had some difficulty in making the people understand his business. However, after a little delay, he succeeded in getting them to open their receptacles, and surrender the letter which he had put in for the Vicar of Lannwell.

He did not commit it to his pocket—no, not even for a moment. The instant he was out of the office, he bit and tore it into an hundred fragments, and tossed them in a bunch into the kennel. "So far well," he said to himself, eying them as they floated away from him on that inky stream—"so far at least it is well. I have at least

robbed my last." He stood for an instant gazing after them, and stamped with his foot upon the pavement, in a sort of savage exultation, as the last bemuddled tatter of them sunk from his view. He then hastily recollected and recovered himself, and banishing as well as he could all symptoms of agitation from his exterior, proceeded at a firm and deliberate pace to his College—but not his chambers.

The truth was, that for some two or three days past, an idea, for which the reader must be quite unprepared, had been floating about in Reginald's thoughts. It was an idea which, had any other person suggested it to him but a week or two before, must have ensured to that person the best blow or kick Reginald could have complimented him withal ; nevertheless, it was, as has been said, an idea with which, during several days, this once proud and haughty spirit had, of its own motion, been making, or endeavouring to make, itself familiar.

The plain state of the case was just this.—Reginald Dalton found that things were come to such a crisis, that it was absolutely necessary for him either to leave Oxford altogether, or to fall upon

some means of permanently diminishing the unavoidable expenses of his accidental residence, in such a way as to admit of his applying *all*, or almost all his allowance from the Vicar, to the acquittal of his remaining debts. To leave Oxford ! This could not be, without tearing himself at the most critical of all possible conjunctures from the mistress of his soul—and what, to do him justice, he considered scarcely less than that, without upturning all his father's schemes as to his future life, thereby destroying, utterly destroying (he had but too much reason to think) the last visions of hope and comfort that still hovered about that best of men, and consoled him for all the evils with which, in consequence chiefly of the very purity and unsuspectingness of his own nature, he had become entangled.

It was in the midst of the harrowing meditations to which this state of affairs had given rise, that Reginald Dalton, while standing the other day by himself in the porch of his College, had happened to observe the porter in the act of affixing a placard to the centre of the gate. He drew near and read a notification, which had been

renewed from time to time during more than a year past, but to which hitherto he had never paid any attention beyond that of a passing glance. It was in these words—words, the like of which are, or have been, familiar to all Oxonian eyes.

“*Quisquis munus Studiosi Servientis in Collegio * * * ensi hodie vacuum suscipere exoptat domus Præfectum absque morâ adeat.—Datum sub sigillo, &c. &c.*”

“Indeed, sir,” said the porter, seeing that Mr Dalton was reading the inscription—“Indeed, sir, I think as how they might give over sticking up them here programs; there’s ne’er a one, now-a-days, looks a’ter them things—Od’s heart, it was not so once, howe’er, Mr Dalton.”

Reginald was quite aware of the nature of the situation, thus in vain offered to any one that should covet it. The thought of *thus* relieving himself from his troubles did cross his mind. Pride instantly shook it away again—again, however, it had returned, to be again rejected.

But now it returned under a very different light, and was welcomed. The young man’s heart was soreness, to the kernel—he had beggared his fa-

ther—he had reduced him to the necessity, for well he knew that must indeed have been the last necessity, of parting with his books—his friends—his only friends—his only companions—his oldest and dearest resources—his pleasure—his pride—his only luxury. He felt this, and he thirsted for penance—he opened his arms to humiliation. His mind was not in a condition to admit of serious deliberate reflection upon all the bearings and consequences of the step he meditated; but in the midst of trouble, remorse, and agony, he felt that no sacrifice could now be too great for him—no pain too severe—no humiliation too lowly. He felt this, his eye rested once more as he passed the threshold of * * *, upon the official document above transcribed; and, eager to put further shrinking out of his own power, he walked straight along to the cloisters to the Provost's residence.

Before attending him thither, however, it may be proper, for the sake of those who are not personally acquainted with the institutions of the English Universities, to say a single word, by way of explanation. Such of my readers, then, as are not in this situation, must know that, in

the original constitution of almost every College in Oxford and Cambridge, provision was made for the reception and free maintenance of a certain number of students, too poor to be able to support themselves during an academical residence. These youths had, in former times, various designations, such as "*Tabardarii*, *Batellarii*," &c. They wore a dress distinguished by its total want of ornament from the other academical costumes. They performed certain semi-menial offices in the hall and the chapel; and, excepting these particulars, they were treated and educated exactly in the same style with the independent students of the house in which they resided. In process of time, the *Sizar*s of Cambridge, retaining the emoluments attached to these situations by the original founders, have, I believe, come, through a variety of causes, to be considered as in nowise degraded below the rank of other students; at least, if we may put implicit faith in some statements in Kirke White's Life and Letters, they are now almost always the sons of gentlemen, and sometimes combine every vain extravagance of expenditure with a dress that used to be the mark of

humble and virtuous poverty. No such broad and distinct change has taken place in the sister University. The more disagreeable and degrading offices formerly exacted, have indeed been dispensed with ; that effect modern feelings gradually produced ; but still there remains enough, and more than enough, to mark the Oxonian *Servitor* as a being of an inferior grade ; and, I believe, very few instances have occurred of that plain gown and tuftless cap being worn there by any one, who could possibly avoid their felt and acknowledged humiliation.

When a stranger dines in one of these stately halls, and observes a poor young man sitting, or perhaps (for such is still the rule in some houses) standing by himself, visibly separated by the peculiarities of his dress and situation from all the rest of his fellow-students, nothing is more natural than that he should feel and express his regret that a spectacle so painful should be suffered to exist in such days as ours. In general, however, the person, so thinking and speaking, might be reminded, that the youth whom he is commiserating, being in all probability the son of some hard-

working artificer, or, which is perhaps still more frequently the case, of some nobleman's butler or coachman, does not in reality entertain any very painful feelings as to the place he holds—that, at all events, there is no obligation on him to hold it one hour longer than he likes—and that, after all, the advantages of receiving the best education which any English peer can give his son, without incurring one shilling of expense, is a thing which an ambitious scholar, born in any of the humbler walks of society, may very fairly consider as far overbalancing a few less agreeable matters connected with it. But the best and completest answer is, “Look over the *Athenæ Oxonienses*—look over the records of this University, and the history, above all, of the Church of England.” One cannot turn three leaves in the ponderous folios of the inimitable old *Anthony-a-Wood*,* without finding the life of some great worthy of our country, commencing with the statement of his ha-

* One of the most amusing, as well as instructive, books in the English language, and recently edited, in a masterly manner, by Mr Bliss of St John's College.

ving been “a poor serving-child, or tabarder,” in some college or hall of this University. It was in that humble gown that Wolsey himself began the career which ended in his Roman purple. But it is quite needless to detain the reader with the long list of illustrious and venerable names, which, if he have any curiosity as to the matter, he may easily make out for himself. Let it suffice to state, what must be well-known to almost every churchman, that, even within our own time, the Bench of England has been ascended and adorned by one Archbishop, and more than one Bishop, whose early years had been spent in these humble situations, and who, but for the bounty that created such provisions, in days which we are too fond of calling dark and barbarous, must have, in all probability, ended their lives in the same obscure condition in which it was their fortune to be born, and from which it was their honour to rise.

To come nearer home, Dr Ainsworth himself, the present Provost of * * * College, had in his youth belonged to this very class of students. For his gradual ascent from thence, he had perhaps reason to thank rather the display of shrewd

talents for worldly business, and the opportunity of making himself useful in certain political elections, than any very distinguished attainments in literature or theology—but, however all that might be, he was now at the head of the society, his first connexion with which had been of that lowly order ; and it is not less certain, that he was, in every circumstance of aspect and demeanour, one of the lordliest personages who had ever filled the chair. Perhaps Reginald's knowledge of this dignitary's own early history might have had some effect upon the young man's mind, in regard to the determination which he had embraced. At all events, it is far from improbable, that this knowledge made him feel less painful embarrassment, than he might otherwise have done, in the prospect of personally communicating to him that determination.

Reginald found THE HEAD in the act of rising from a solitary luncheon of pork cutlets, the savoury effluvia of which were, indeed, sufficiently perceptible long before he entered his apartment. He received our young friend with an air of dignified suavity—invited him to taste his Madeira

—the only wine, he observed with a serious look, that Dr Wall would suffer him to touch now-a-days—and then establishing himself in his accustomed fauteuil, in an attitude at once easy and commanding, he begged to be informed what business had procured him this unexpected honour from Mr Dalton.

Reginald was in no mood for preamble or circumlocution—he told his story at once, so abruptly and concisely indeed, that the great man did not just at first appear to comprehend its drift. The youth repeated it over again in the same words. Dr Ainsworth eyed him keenly for a moment, then knit his brows, looked downwards, and stroked his band—a slight reinforcement at the same time adding itself to the natural or acquired rubicundity of his large and massive visage.

After the pause of an instant, his countenance recovered all the serene and benignant solemnity of its usual aspect. “Young gentleman,” he said, “I take it for granted you have not come on this errand without perfect deliberation; and really, sitting here as I do, I for one cannot but say, that, viewing all the circumstances of the case,

sir, which, to be sure, you and your friends must have done better than I can be supposed to do, why, really, Mr Dalton, it is impossible for me to say that I do not approve of what is proposed."

"I am heartily glad, sir," said Reginald, very hurriedly—"I am extremely glad to hear what you say."

"Yes, indeed," the dignitary resumed, "the more I consider the matter, the more judicious does it seem to me your plan is. It would, indeed, be a thousand pities that you should quit the University—very good report of you from the Sub-dean—very flattering reports indeed—have not seen Barton of late—but that's of no consequence—poor man, he's always too busy to think of these little matters—heard you myself at the collections t'other day—construed very prettily, sir—very prettily indeed—exceedingly prettily, Mr Dalton—quitting the University, without degree, always a step much to be deprecated—too common of late, but bad, Mr Dalton, bad—and, after all, there is but little of disagreeable in the situation—Cambridge Sizars, in fact, the samething, and nobody hesitates to put on the Sizar's gown

there—nobody. Here, many of the most respectable men—many of the first men in Oxford, I may say, have done the same thing. Manners make the man, as old Wykham says. One must crack the nut for the kernel—emolument not inconsiderable—no bar to a fellowship, Mr Dalton, none in the world—quite the contrary. You know, I myself—and there's Mr Rodds—highly respectable man Rodds—indolent, else might rise high. Upon the whole, Mr Dalton, I approve of the thing—think your resolution highly to your honour—shall make it our study, sir, to soften every thing. You may depend upon it, we will, sir—we will indeed. Will you oblige me so far as to hand me the Buttery-book? There, ay, that's it with the clasps—and the ink-stand, if you please.—Beg your pardon, Mr Dalton—old limbs stiff, you know, my young friend—ay, here's the place—here, Mr Dalton, you have nothing to do but sign your name—here, below mine. Ay, that will do—now the whole affair is over—the Sub-dean will send for you in the course of the day—better not come into the hall for a day or two, perhaps, until the talk is over. Young people will

talk—never mind their talk, Dalton—never mind it, Dalton—not worth a straw the whole of it, my dear fellow.”

The courteous manner in which, upon this painful occasion, he had been received and dismissed by the reverend Provost, certainly excited a feeling of gratitude in Reginald's mind ; and that feeling was in nowise diminished, when he had had time to reflect over all that had passed in the solitude of his own chamber. To say truth, however, had the young man been able to trace all this kindly behaviour to its right source, he might not improbably have viewed the matter in somewhat a different light. The fact was, that, just at that time, this dignitary's son, a practitioner of rising reputation at the Chancery-bar, was paying his addresses to the only daughter of an old East Indian director, who, though his own fortune had been entirely acquired in commerce, was pleased, in virtue of a Welch pedigree, to consider himself entitled to nothing less than a patrician alliance ; and who, accordingly, had testified no great approbation of Mr Ainsworth's suit, alleging, among other reasons, the extremely

humble origin of that gentleman's family, of which he considered the well-known fact of the old Doctor's having been a servitor in an Oxford College, as of itself furnishing the most incontrovertible evidence. The Provost, from whom this circumstance had not been concealed, conceived a sudden idea, the moment young Dalton told him his errand, that the worthy director might be induced to lessen the rigour of his prejudices, on being made to understand, that the situation, of which he had formed so degraded a notion, *was* occasionally held by people of the most blameless descent ; and already enjoyed in his own mind the effect which might be produced by a well-timed mention of Mr Dalton, a puff of his Lancashire lineage, (to the loftiness of which Dr Ainsworth was no stranger,) and a statement of *his* wearing, at that very moment, the same tuftless trencher-cap, which had in former days shaded the dignitary's own physiognomy—but this *par parenthese*.

Though gratitude, and some other gentle enough emotions, were mingled in the troubled breast of our young man, many hot and tempestuous thoughts boiled there along with them.

Now, he would sit with his hand upon his brow, sunk in languor, wearied of himself, and of the world ; and now, starting suddenly from the attitude and the feebleness of dejection, he would pace about his room with an eye of flame, and a brow knit as into furrows of iron. His cap was lying on the table ; his eye no sooner chanced to rest upon it, than he seized it and hurled it against the wall. It met him again in his walk ; he kicked it furiously from him ; he lifted it up the next moment, took out his knife, and cut off the silk tuft ; and then seeing that he had but half defaced the symbol of his forfeited rank, he began to gnaw the threads out with his teeth by their roots. He flung them handful by handful into the fire, and watched their disappearance with the stern smile, which no man ever smiles but in solitude.

He had just completed this work of destruction, when a knock sounded at his door. Who or what it might be, he cared not—he flung the door open, and Frederick Chisney entered, attended by a couple of small sleek cockers.

This gentleman did not seem to remark any thing of the agitation, which Reginald in vain

strove to conceal. A quantity of books and papers were lying in confusion on the table, and he began to apologize for disturbing Mr Dalton in his studies.

“Nay, nay,” said Reginald, “I was not busy—not in the least.”

“Well, well, I’m not going to trouble you with a long visit, at all events. I’ll tell you my errand in a moment. It is only to say, that I happen to be run quite short, and if you chance to be in cash, I wish you could give me the trifle you borrowed from me two months ago.”

“A thousand pardons,” said Reginald—“You shall have the money this instant.” With this Reginald opened his desk and paid him. It was exactly the sum which he had received from his bookseller that morning—in other words, it was all the money he was at the moment master of. However, in spite of all his art, there had been some symptoms of coldness of late about Chisney, and the mode of his present address was such, that Reginald could not endure the idea of remaining an instant longer in his debt.

“God bless my soul,” said Chisney, pocketing

the bank-notes, "what a queer mad fellow you are, Dalton! In the name of wonder, what have you been doing with your trencher?"

Reginald took up the cap, and tossed it aside. He paused for a moment, and then said, in a voice of perfect calmness, "You see what my follies have brought me to, Chisney; I have no longer any right to wear my cap, otherwise than as you see it."

"Why, what the devil! what is your meaning?"

"The meaning is, sir, that I have all but ruined my father—that I never knew, until to-day, the extent to which I had injured him—that I am resolved to injure him no farther—that I have entered myself as a servitor."

"A servitor!—pooh, pooh! you're joking now.—Why, as I live, you are serious. Upon my word, you've been very hasty, however—but you are displeased, Dalton.—Well, it's your own affair—you'll change your mind before to-morrow perhaps.—But stop, what am I thinking of? Perhaps it may be inconvenient for you just now to part with—allow me to return this, Dalton."

“ No, not for the world, sir. Keep your purse in your pocket.”

“ Nay, if you take things so, I have no more to say. Good-morrow to you, Dalton. I shall be happy to see you at Christ-Church—don’t suppose that I shall sport my——Nay, nay, if this is the way of it, sir, I wish you once more a very good morning.—Come, Juno—Spot, you b——.”

“ Good morning, sir,” said Reginald, rising and bowing. Chisney returned a very formal bow, and then walked out of the apartment, whistling his dogs to his heel.

CHAPTER VI.

REGINALD, as the reader may easily suppose, did not obey the summons of the dinner-bell this day, neither did he send for any thing to his room—his heart was sick, and he loathed the idea of food. He was so foolish, however, as to draw a bottle of wine, one of the few that remained in his possession, and to swallow several bumpers, one after the other, as rapidly as he could pour them down his throat.

He waited until about five o'clock, and then sallied out to encounter an interview, which he well knew must be a very painful one, with Ellen Hesketh and Mr Keith. Of Ellen's love, of the purity, constancy, and passionate tenderness of her attachment, he could not, even in this jaundiced and bitter state of his mind, bring himself to entertain any doubt. But we have already seen, that he had some reason to suspect Mr

Keith of having, in some measure, changed his views or his opinions concerning him, and that this coldness, from whatever cause it might have originated, had been particularly perceptible but the evening before—What, under these circumstances, might be the effect produced on the old Priest by the communication which he conceived it his duty to lose no farther time in making, this the event only could shew ; but Reginald was in a fit mood for making the gloomiest guesses in regard to that, as well as most other matters. He approached St Clements with nerves braced, as he thought, for the worst that could happen, and touched the knocker of Mr Keith's door with a firm and rapid hand.

He was admitted by the only domestic of the house, an elderly woman, who had once been a great friend of Reginald's, but who had recently (perhaps in consequence of comparing his behaviour, in a certain particular, with the liberality of Mr Chisney's *douceurs*,) regarded him with somewhat less kindness of aspect. She told him, the moment he passed the threshold, that her master had given orders to shew him up, in case

he called, to his bed-chamber. He followed her up stairs, and was forthwith admitted.

The old man was sitting in his elbow-chair, close by a large fire. He was looking worse than Reginald had seen him all the winter, and muffled up, as if he had been preparing for a Russian journey, in a huge cloak, lined all through with fur. He received Reginald courteously, but drily, answered in monosyllables his inquiries about his health, and pointed to the opposite chair, but saved himself the trouble of saying, "sit down."

"Mr Keith," said Reginald, "I have come on purpose——"

"I know what has brought you, Mr Dalton; your friend Chisney was here half an hour ago, he told me the whole story. You may spare yourself the pain of repeating it."

"Mr Keith, I confess that I am a little hurt with your way of——"

"My way of what, Mr Dalton? Really, really, my young friend, you must just expect that I am to have, at these years, my own views of things; truly, this is the least I have to ask of you."

“ Most certainly, sir, I should be the last person——”

“ I am heartily glad to hear you say so, Mr Dalton ; and now, since you are taking matters like a young man of sense, I really must just take the present opportunity, Mr Dalton, to say a single word or two, rather more seriously than you may perhaps have looked for. Yes, young gentleman, it is my duty, and I feel it to be so. There has been a great deal of very foolish work going on here, sir—very foolish work indeed, young man. I cannot say anything—I have no right nor title, no, nor wish neither, to have anything to do about your affairs farther than as they are connected with mine—with what I reckon as mine ; and really, upon my word, I am willing to give you credit for what you have been doing to-day. I presume it’s been with your friends’ knowledge, and by their advice ; and, at any rate, I honour anything that looks like a manly sense of repentance. I do honour *that*, sir. But now listen calmly to me, Mr Dalton ; put yourself in my place, and say what you would do. I leave it quite to your own judgment—I

ask no better, sir. Just observe what sort of prospects all this leaves—just say, if you can, that I ought, in common discretion, as a guardian, a parent I may say, to allow things to go on as they have been doing. Just lay your hand on your heart, and speak out. I refer it to your own sense of decency and propriety—Can I, I ask, be justifiable—can I be doing my duty in the trust I bear, if I countenance, under present circumstances, your continuing to visit here on the sort of footing you have been ?”

“ Mr Keith, I must crave leave to answer by a question—Have I ever concealed any part of my circumstances from you ? Can you charge me with having practised any sort of disguise at any period of our acquaintance ?”

“ No, no, not at all, that’s not my meaning—I have nothing of the sort to allege ; and, let me add, if I had, I should not perhaps have taken just this way ; but no matter, to the point. I am indeed,” (here the Priest sunk his voice) “ I am indeed sincerely, most sincerely, distressed for you. I am distressed for your father, sir—I am very heartily grieved for him. This last step, sir,

shews more fully what is the real state of your family affairs, than anything could have done. Depend on't, I feel very deeply ; but, my good young friend, you are very young, and Ellen is a very, very young creature. I know it will be a sore heart to you both ; but really I must speak my mind, for her sake, for yours, for all our sakes, and for your father's sake as much as anything else, Mr Dalton ; and I must just say, very distinctly, that I have been casting every thing in my mind, and that I cannot consent to any farther intercourse, at least for some time. I know I am paining you, man, and I am very sorry for that ; but, to make a long tale short, 'tis seen folly and absurdity all this just now, and you must really just bear wi't like a man, and settle yourself to your studies. Na, na, the shortest follies are the best —them that cannot rin must walk—we must ride the water as we find it. You shall carry with you my heartiest, kindest, good wishes, and perhaps we may meet, ere very lang be, under different circumstances."

" Sir, I perfectly understand you. You mean to forbid me your house, Mr Keith ?"

“ You put things strongly, young man ; but, in friendship to yourself, I think it’s the only course that’s left for us.”

“ And Ellen—Have you informed her of this ?”

“ Miss Hesketh is my ward, sir. I have dropped several hints—I have acted as I deemed it my duty.”

“ And she knows what you have been saying ?”

“ Not exactly, perhaps. I shall lose no time in informing her of my views.”

“ Where is she, sir ? I may speak with her, I suppose—you will not refuse *that* ?”

“ Why, I believe, my young man, it would be meikle better for a’ concerned, if I *did* refuse that ; but, however, I wish to do all as gently as may be. God knows, ’tis only the thought of your own goods. Well, you had better step down stairs and ask for her ; but mind this, there’s to be no promises, no vows.”

“ No, no, sir—you may depend on it there shall be no vows now. Farewell, then, Mr Keith. I have to return my acknowledgments, sir, for

all the hospitality I have met with under your roof.—Farewell, sir.”

“God bless you, sir; I hope—I hope you will do well. You have my heartiest good wishes, and prayers too, if you think them worth the having. God bless you.” The old man put forth his hand. Reginald gave his with much coldness and restraint. The Priest shook it, passive as it was, very fervently, and Reginald retired.

“You will find Miss Hesketh in the parlour. She went out to the chapel a little while since, but I heard her come in again; and now, remember, be short, be brief—such things can never be done too briefly.”

The young man answered this with a very haughty glance, and descended the staircase with slow and heavy footsteps. He threw open the parlour door, but there was no one there—he rung the bell violently, and asked the servant, where was Miss Hesketh.

“Miss Hesketh is engaged,” said the woman, drawing herself up.

“Where—with whom? I must see Miss Hesketh.”

“ Miss Hesketh is not at home just now, sir.”

“ Not at home ?—Impossible. I shall wait, however, till she comes.”

“ Lord ! sir, you speak very strangely, if I may be bold.—But, if you *will* know it, Miss Hesketh is in the garden.”

“ Alone ?”

“ A gentleman went with her.”

“ Enough—enough.”

Reginald walked out of the house and across the green. When he had got about half-way to the Chapel, he heard a shriek—a female shriek—it came from the Chapel. It was Ellen’s voice—he rushed to the door—it was fastened. He shook it half off its hinges with one grasp, then put his foot to the lock, and kicked it open. He saw Ellen—(she had twined her arms round a pillar)—her face deadly pale, her eyes open and aghast—and again she screamed. Close beside stood Chisney, his countenance was like fire, his dress disordered—he stamped with his foot, and leapt forward—Reginald rushed to meet him.—“ Villain ! Scoundrel ! Dastard !” and instantly they grappled. Reginald sprung like a tiger at his throat, half-

strangled him with his gripe, and dealing a furious blow at the same moment against the stomach, saw him stretched upon the marble, and trampled his breast with his heel.

Ellen still clung to the pillar with the same convulsive closeness. He put his arms round her—she sunk upon his bosom, trembling, feeble as a child. He lifted her in his arms, and ran out of the Chapel. She had fainted ere he passed its threshold. He knelt beside the well, and dashed water on her brow and bosom, and saw her open her heavy eyelids, and close them again. Again he flung a handful of water on her face, and shouted for help. The old woman came out—Mr Keith flung open his window—the next instant the old man was at his side.

“Young man, you see what you have done. My poor girl—Ellen, my darling ! I am here—I am here !”

Ellen opened her eyes, turned them wildly first on Reginald, and then towards the Chapel, and dropped her head on the Priest's bosom. The Priest cast his eyes in the same direction. Mr Chisney was standing by the Chapel door, his arms

folded on his breast. The old man whispered into Ellen's ear, "Who? who is it? What has happened? Who is it that has dared——?"

"Look yonder, sir," said Reginald.

At that moment Chisney bounded across an angle of the green, and sprang to the top of the wall. He stood there long enough to say, in an audible whisper, "Mr Dalton, take this," and to fling a card into the enclosure; and then he leaped into the next field, and was lost to their view.

Reginald obeyed the impulse of the moment, and pursued. He also leaped the wall, and remained for some time out of view. After a few minutes, however, he again made his appearance at the front-door of the house. He knocked there, and was, after a little pause, admitted by Mr Keith himself, who had a huge cudgel in his hand.

"Come in, come in, Mr Dalton. Come your ways in to the house. Have you seen him? Have you seen the scound——?"

"I have."

"May eternal confusion——"

"Hem——"

“Heaven’s curse of curses, sir ! Where has he gone ? Where shall I find him ?

“Oh no, sir, I believe you need not give yourself any trouble.”

“Trouble, sir ? I wonder what you take me for—Trouble, indeed !”

“I only wish to know that Miss Hesketh is recovered. I have no desire to trouble *you*, sir.”

“Nay, nay, my young man, you must not take it this gait *now*. I believe—I fear—I greatly fear—I comprehend the truth of the case.”

“’Tis no great matter, sir. How is Miss Hesketh ?”

“Better, O better. She’ll be herself by and by. I have much that I would fain say to you, Mr Dalton. I beg you to come in. Heaven’s mercy ! What can I do ?”

“Can I see Miss Hesketh ?”

“Nay, nay, you’re too hasty. I’m sure you will allow it would be better not just now.”

“I will call again in the evening, then.”

“Oh, my young man, your looks are very distressing to me. Will ye not rest ye here for a

little till ye're calmed, till we're all calmed? We must really have some talk."

"*That* may keep cold for a few hours, I presume," said Reginald. "I shall be here, let me see, exactly at eight—you may expect me at eight. If I don't come, I shall write to you."

"Very well, you'll take your own way. Oh! Mr Dalton, you're not doing me justice—you're not putting yourself in my place—you're thinking quite wrongly. I feel, I assure you, as God's my witness, I feel more than you will give me credit for. Do stay here, and cool yourself."

"I can't, sir, if I would. I have some business in College—I can't stay at present."

"Then you'll be sure to come at eight," said the Priest, seizing and squeezing his hand.

"At eight?" said Reginald.

"Yes, at eight. Did not you say you would come at eight?"

"Ay, true—I did say so. I shall, if possible, attend you at eight."

"And you'll stay to your supper, Mr Dalton? Now, promise me, like a good lad. Nay, nay,

man, you don't know me—you're not behaving like yourself."

"Farewell, till eight," said Reginald, turning abruptly from the Priest. The old man stood in his door-way, looking after him. Perhaps he might have been doing so for more than a couple of minutes, when he turned round again, and re-traced his steps——

"What is it, Mr Dalton—I pray you, what is the matter?—Stop, nay, stop, young man, what is your purpose?"

"But for a moment—one single moment," said Reginald, and he rushed past the old man into the parlour.

Ellen was lying on the sofa, pale as death, but the blood rushed into her face when she saw him. The old Priest was close behind him, but he took no notice of him; and before he could say a word, he had taken hold of Ellen's hand, pressed that to his lips, and then imprinted a single burning and solemn kiss upon her cheek.

"Young man," said the Priest, pulling him back, "What behaviour is this? You do wrong, wrong—very wrong."

Reginald turned to him, and with a cheek and an eye full of fire—"I do right, sir," he said.—
"I do nothing but what is right, and *my* right. Once more, dearest Ellen,"—he proceeded, bending over her again—"once more—and now farewell."

With that he bowed to the astonished Priest, and, without a word more, walked from the room and from the house.

CHAPTER VII.

HE had scarcely reached his own room, and flung himself, exhausted, into a chair, ere he received a visit from a young gentleman of Christ-Church, who intimated that he had come for the purpose of arranging the particulars of that meeting, which, (in the course of the brief interview which had taken place between Chisney and Reginald in the field adjoining to Mr Keith's garden,) it had already been agreed, must not be deferred beyond the same evening.

Reginald desired his visitor to sit down for a few moments, and went in quest of Stukeley, whom, as a Batchelor of Arts, and as a person that could have no idea of taking orders, he thought he might, with least hazard of any serious inconvenience, request to act as his friend upon this occasion. Stukeley, abruptly summoned from a party in the common room, where Reginald had formed,

as might have been expected, the chief topic of conversation, was at first inclined not to have any thing to do with an affair which he not unnaturally imagined must have arisen out of some rash proceeding of this young man's ; whose mind, he did not doubt, must be, after what had occurred that morning, in a very irritable and agitated state. Reginald, however, in the course of a short walk in the College Garden, convinced him thoroughly of the baseness which Chisney's conduct had exhibited. Stukeley's generous spirit failed not to suggest to him, that the refusal of his aid, after the step which Reginald had that day taken, and which the Head of the College had lost no time in announcing, might be interpreted in a way he could not bear to think of. The moment his mind was quite satisfied as to the justice of the quarrel, he accepted the proffered office, although not indeed without avowing the reluctance and aversion he felt towards being concerned in such an affair, between two persons whom he had been accustomed to look upon as almost equally his friends. He therefore repaired, without delay, to Dalton's rooms, where he held a conversation of

considerable length with the Christ-Church man, and then rejoined our hero in the garden, and communicated to him the result.

“ I fear,” he said, “ there is no chance of my being able to serve you as a peace-maker. The blow, Dalton—But why say more of it ? I see it must be so ; and you have, no doubt, made up your mind as to the consequences.”

“ I have, my dear Stukeley. Alas ! You know not how it pains me to think of what I am exposing you to.”

“ Me, my dear fellow—don’t waste a thought on that. God bless you, I don’t value Oxford a shilling. My feelings are for you and for——”

“ Say no more, Stukeley. You agreed upon the old hour ?”

“ Yes—on the whole, perhaps, it was as well.”

“ Much better—and now we have just about an hour.

“ Ay, and we must be busy. Do you go to your rooms, and look after your affairs there, for you know you can scarcely sleep here to-night. I shall have everything ready for you.”

They shook hands, and Reginald repaired once

more to his apartment in * * *. He felt satisfied, as he entered it, that he should never see it again as its master. He knew perfectly well, that if there be one offence for which the rules of academical discipline admit of no forgiveness, he was on the brink of committing it. He knew that he had virtually ceased to be a member of the University. He knew that his life, if he preserved it, was changed, changed in every colour. He knew that whatever might be the result, he was about to do what must give greater, a thousand times greater pain to his father, than all his previous errors put together. He knew that these, weighed against this one step, must be as a feather. He felt, however, that he *could* not do otherwise than he had done—than he was about to do. There was trouble, darkness, miserable darkness within ; but there was burning ire too—indignation, and contempt, and steady scorn, and the hot thirst of blood ; all these, strangely blended with the tender yearnings of a young and living love, and yet all shrouded and enveloped, more strangely still, in a profound feeling of weariness of life.

The young man arranged matters the best way

he could in so short a time, with a view to his rooms being either thrown into other hands, or occupied by himself, under the only circumstances that could admit of his returning to them. He then wrote with great calmness, and at considerable length, to his father; and more hastily and passionately to Miss Hesketh. More than one tear dropped on one—perhaps on both—of these solemn letters. They contained his farewells to the only two human beings who, he could suppose, would weep inconsolable tears over his grave and his memory. He sealed them both, and wrapping them under one open cover, thrust the packet into his bosom.

He had just made an end of it when Stukeley came into his room, wrapped in a wide travelling cloak. He made Reginald put on a similar dress, and then they walked together through the town, avoiding the principal streets, and so straight on to the appointed scene, which was in one of the fields upon the Isis, a little way eastward from the bridge.

The twilight was already verging rapidly towards darkness ere they reached the spot. Mr

Chisney and his friend were there before them. Stukeley, upon coming to the ground, went forwards and drew Chisney's second aside for a moment. There was some whispering between them, but it lasted only for a few moments, Mr Chisney turning his back upon the whole party while it continued. His second left Stukely and approached him—he waved his hand, as if to forbid him from speaking, and after hearing what he did say, (whatever that might be) he stamped impatiently, and muttered something that put an end to all colloquy.

When the ground was measured, and Reginald placed within so few paces of his antagonist, he could, in spite of the twilight, see that his cheek was burning.

“Chisney,” said he, “you know that I am blameless.”

“I know nothing, Mr Dalton—no time for words here. Gentlemen, I suppose we are both ready.”

The signal was given—both fired, and neither fell. On the very instant Chisney called for another pair of pistols, in a voice hoarse with pas-

sion—they were produced. Again they awaited—again they both obeyed the signal. Reginald's arm was touched just below the elbow—but almost ere he *felt* the blow, he was aware that his own ball had taken severer effect. He saw Chisney spring from the ground, and fall prostrate. There was a shouting and crying—some one leapt from behind a hedge—all was confusion—his eye became unsteady, and he could scarcely stagger a few paces forwards, ere he also fell.

Reginald had been stunned in this way, in consequence of the ball grazing the bone near the left elbow ; but he recovered himself in a second or two, and found there was nothing to prevent Stukeley, and even himself, from endeavouring to be of use to Mr Chisney, whom his second and surgeon had already placed upon a piece of wicker wattling, torn from the adjacent fence. From the whispers of the medical gentleman, and the ghastly appearance which the wounded man's countenance had already assumed, Reginald gathered but too plainly, that there was every reason to expect the most fatal issue. However, there was no time for reflection ; a handkerchief being

knotted firmly round his arm, our youth lent his right hand to the common service ; and in the course of a few minutes, the party were all on their way to Christ-Church.

It was by this time so dusky, that, by keeping to the meadow and the lane, they reached Canterbury-gate, without having collected any crowd about them ; and Mr Chisney was deposited in his own room, and stript, and the surgeon had begun to probe his wound, which was in the right groin, ere either Reginald or Stukeley could command any part of their attention to themselves. Chisney, aroused from the stupor into which he had fallen by the application of the instruments, cast a hasty glance upon the group that hung round his bed, and the moment he recognized Reginald, waved with his hand, as if to bid him quit the place. The doctor at the same instant made a signal to the same effect, and whispered something into Stukeley's ear. Reginald was just advancing to say something to Chisney, when the rattle of the bull-dogs' batons was heard under the window ; and Chisney's second, ere there was a single moment for consideration, drew both Stuke-

ley and Dalton out of the apartment, and ran with them as quickly as possible towards the gate by which they had entered the College. When they came to the corner of Peckwater, however, they perceived that the door was shut, and that several persons were standing within it. It was evident that an alarm had been given, and they all three retreated for a moment within the shade of the nearest stair-case, to consult what was to be done. It was clear, that every thing must be attempted in order to avoid the confinement which must inevitably and instantly follow, in case their concern in the affair should have been known, and this, they were quite aware, could not be concealed at most for more than an hour or two. The Proctors were already, it seemed, within Christ-Church—the whole buildings would of course be searched without delay.

Frank Hall, (this was the name of Chisney's friend,) after musing for a single moment, said he believed there was still one chance remaining; and cautioning them to creep close behind him in the shade, led the way to a little wicket, not far from where they had been standing, upon one

of the sides of the great quadrangle. He made a signal, which was, after a moment's pause, answered and obeyed from within, and the whole party found themselves within a very small paved court. It was a female who had opened the door—and there was no lack of whispers of surprise and rebuke, when she perceived that so many visitors had been admitted, in virtue of a summons that she had no doubt understood as announcing only one. Mr Hall, however, found means to make the girl comprehend something of the necessities of the case. She hesitated for an instant—a kiss and a crown reinforced his arguments, and she led them into the house.

“The door is half open,” whispered Hall—
“I see the light of the candles—we can't pass without being discovered.”

“Never fear,” the girl whispered in reply ;
“master's sleeping, and mistress is sitting with her back towards us.”

In passing the door, Reginald could not avoid throwing one glance into the apartment of the Canon. The purple old man was dozing with his feet on the fender, a huge night-cap on his head,

and an enormous black cat asleep on his lap. The wife, daughter, niece, or cousin, a pimpled paragon, was sitting on the opposite side of the fire, nodding over a volume of Hannah More, and a rummer of hot brandy and water—a pack of dirty cards lay half way between her and the Canon, and one of the tall unsnuffed candles was distilling a slow heavy stream of liquid tallow upon the oak-en boards of a folio volume of Chrysostom. They glided rapidly past, and were in a moment in the Canon's garden, among tall sighing poplars, and a wilderness of wet sheets, smocks, and surplices. By means of a stout old plum-tree, they successively reached the top of the wall ; they dropt as rapidly into the little dark lane, and were instantly saluted with a whistle—a shout—and the rattling of batons from beside a postern-gate, some thirty paces off. They ran like madmen, and gained the end of the lane in safety ; but Reginald had the misfortune, just in turning the corner, to stumble over an old woman and her basket, and though he recovered his feet in an instant, both Stukeley and Hall had vanished.

He got into Mertoun-lane, however, and, after

running as far as the church, had the satisfaction to hear the bull-dogs turn up by Oriel. He did not slacken his pace, nevertheless, but continued to hold eastward as rapidly as his legs could carry him. Every thing was perfectly quiet—not a creature in the lanes ; and when he had reached the bridge, and found that nobody was stationed on it, he stopped to draw breath, concluding that he had for the present baffled all the diligence of his pursuers.

Yet, when he had had leisure to cool for a moment, what was the avail of all this ? He was alone ; the companions of his flight might have been taken ; at all events, they were separated from him—he had but a few shillings in his pocket—he was every way unprovided for a journey—above all, he was quite ignorant of London, even of the road to London, and he was well aware, that it was only in the obscurity of the capital he could hope to escape notice even for a day or two. Why take the trouble to spend a night in the fields, with the certainty, for such he considered it, of being stopt and apprehended in the first village he should come to in the morning ?

He was so well acquainted with the strictness of the police maintained in that district, both within and beyond the limits of the proctorial authority, and so sensible to the suspicions which his own appearance must excite, (by the way, *inter alia*, he had lost his hat in dropping from the Canon's garden-wall,) that, after casting about the whole affair in his mind for a single moment, he became pretty well convinced, that the best thing he could do, was to return directly and surrender himself.

One thing, however, he might try. He might run on as far as St Clements, and see whether old Keith could give him any thing of assistance, of concealment, or of advice. Even if he could not, he should still redeem the promise he had given—he should still see Ellen once more—he should at least avoid the additional misery of being thrown into confinement, in ignorance whether she had or had not recovered from the effects of the brutal incident of the afternoon.

Thus determined, Reginald advanced along the road, and had the satisfaction of reaching the Priest's door, without the smallest interruption. He did not venture, however, to make use of the

knocker, but tapped lightly with his fingers upon one of the parlour-windows. But he had scarcely touched the glass, ere the door was opened with a violent jerk, and he found himself enclosed from behind in the arms of a certain public character, on whose appearance in that place he certainly had not calculated. This was no other than a certain well-known officer of the municipality of Oxford—a personage whose youth had been spent before the mast—but whose brawny manhood, and enormous laced-hat, had long been the terror of all ungown'd evil-doers within the purlieus of this classical city ; while his delightful method of singing “ The Maid of Lodi,” had rendered him a mighty favourite among many classes of the academical residents. Reginald, who had often treated the old fellow with a can of ale, in return for his melodious exertions, thought his acquaintance might perhaps hear a little reason ; so, being destitute of cash, he poured into his ear a most munificent supply of promises—but the virtue of the ancient tar was proof against any such temptations. He answered by thrusting his tongue in his cheek, and squirting out an enormous flood of tobacco-juice, croaked with a most hideous chuckle, “ A

joke's a joke, by G—, my master." He then applied a whistle to his lips, and sent forth a shrill note, which instantly brought three or four stout constables leaping over the Priest's garden-door; and Reginald, surrounded and grappled by the whole party, resigned himself to his fate.

Ellen Hesketh rushed out of the house, just as they were leading him down the steps from its door. He heard her scream, and rid himself by a desperate effort from the gripe of his attendants. He caught her in his arms, and pressed her to his beating breast—she folded herself round him—her white arms encircled him with wild and clinging energy—she sobbed out her love and her terror—she grew to him as if death could not divide them. But in a moment the old Priest was at their side; he whispered gently into Ellen's ear, and received her, slowly yielding, into his arms; he whispered something to Reginald too, and wrung the young man's hands with paternal fervour. Reginald (it had all occupied but an instant) recovered his self-possession, and turning with perfect composure to the officers, said, "Now I am ready—I will walk quietly along with you."

In the course of his progress up the High-street, he was surrendered by the city-officers into the hands of one of the Proctors, and forthwith conducted to the Castle, under the guidance of this academical magistrate, who treated him with every kind of politeness and sympathy, and did not leave him in his gloomy abode, until he had in person enjoined the jailor to do every thing his rules permitted for the unfortunate young gentleman's comfort.

This injunction was, of course, not the less necessary, in consequence of Reginald's being designated in the Vice-Chancellor's warrant, by the style of his new and humble rank in the University. Even the Proctor's interference did not perhaps prevent this circumstance from having some influence ; but, however that might have been, the young man was lodged in a chamber, which to him appeared a most perfect picture of misery—a small place, with bare stone-walls, very high up in that huge old tower which has frowned over Isis, I believe, ever since the days of Rufus.

The height of this place from the ground dispensed, however, with some of the worst features

of a common dungeon—there were no bars upon the window, from which, the moon having now appeared above the horizon, Reginald might have entertained his eyes, if he had had a mind, with one of the finest prospects the magnificent architecture of Oxford had ever presented to him—the whole city, river, and tower, and tree, and spire, and minaret, lying stretched out below him as in a map. But, to say truth, our hero had no eyes for all this beauty. The variety of scenes through which, in the course of that one short day, he had passed, had left his mind in a state of the most intense excitation, and combining with the smart of the slight wound he had received, reduced him to the verge of phrenzy.

A surgeon waited upon him, and dressed his arm, ere he had been half an hour in the Castle. This gentleman also compelled him to swallow an opiate, which had some effect in diminishing the disorder of his nerves, though sleep that night was entirely out of the question. The bodily fatigue and exhaustion under which he laboured, were, it is true, so great, that, had he been surrounded with any thing like silence, it is not im-

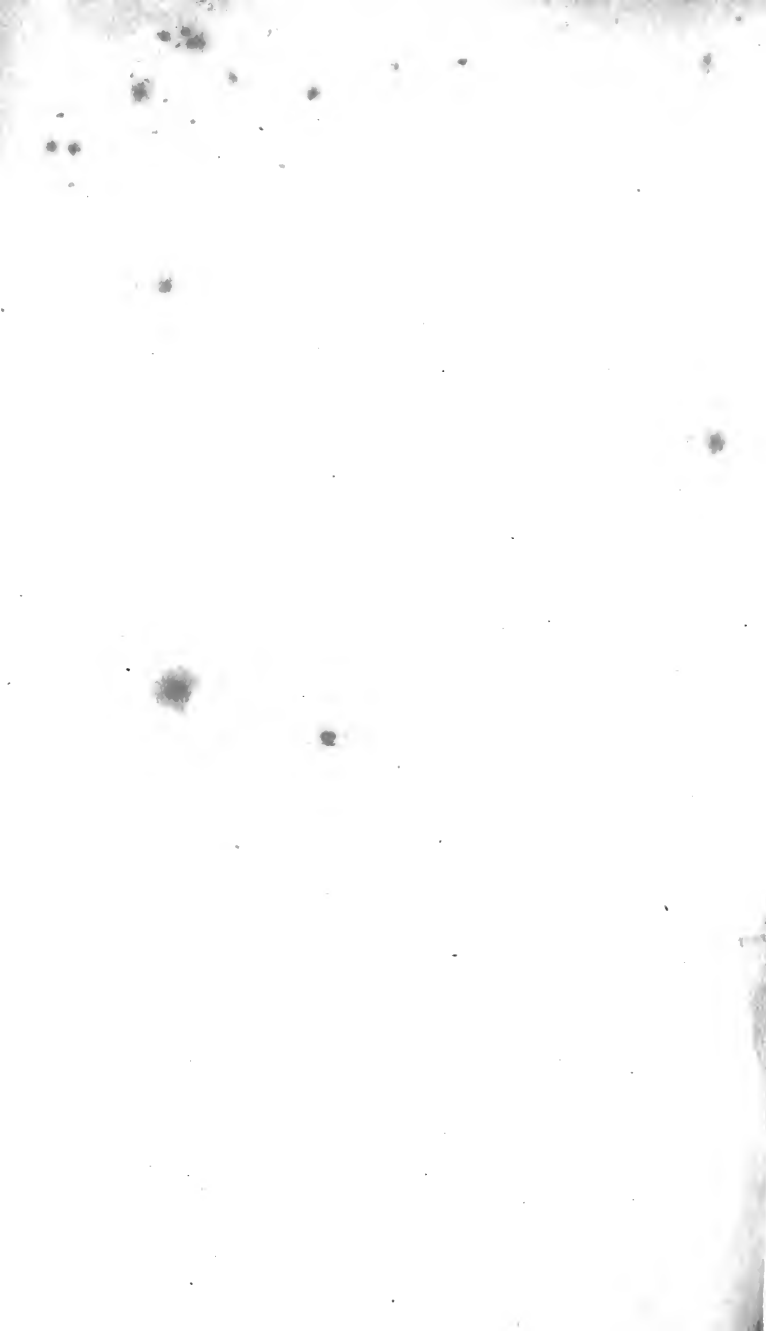
probable they might have triumphed over the tumultuous agitation of his thoughts. But all night long he was tormented into watchfulness by sounds of the most disgusting nature—for the assizes were near, and the felons, with whom the place was plentifully stocked, were taking advantage, as is their custom, of the absence of the turnkeys, to carry on nocturnal conversations with each other touching their various offences and expected fates, screaming and shouting through the various apertures which opened from their cells upon the stair-case and passages for the admission of air. The harsh croaking voices of these villains, the savage oaths and blasphemous imprecations with which their discourse was interlarded, and the shocking character of their themes—these, together with the ceaseless clanking of their irons, were more than enough to keep him sleepless. He listened with a new sense of horror to this language of base and brutal depravity—the half-triumphant recapitulations of crimes—the gallows jokes, the poor attempts to disguise the tremours of conscious and shrinking guilt. Between the acts of this hideous concert, dark enough were

the meditations on which his own tost spirit fed itself. When daylight broke upon the dungeon, it seemed to him as if it came to dash aside the blackness of one long terrible dream, in which every element of horror had been brooding over him—his sense of bodily pain, and all his confused remembrances of shame, and anger, and violence, and degradation, and scorn, and blood—all mixed up together in one inextricable chaos, with visions such as haunt the imagination of ruffians—the stalking phantoms of murdered men—the air-drawn dagger—and stripes, and chains, and gibbets.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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